



The Advent

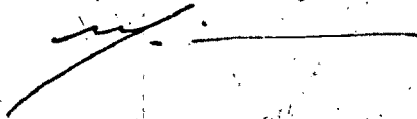
105

Ad 96

VOTIV

In each one's life a moment comes when he has to make a choice between the Path and the muddle. You cannot put one foot here and one foot there. If you try it you will be torn to pieces.

A heart that does not choose is a heart that will die.



P14341

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February 1953

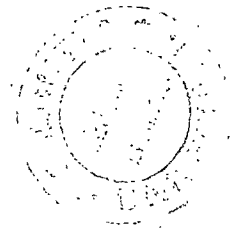
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"Mine is the labour of the battling gods:
Imposing on the slow reluctant years
The flaming will that reigns beyond the stars,
They lay the law of Mind on Matter's works
And win the soul's wish from earth's inconscient force."

SAVITRI, IX. 2.

SRI AUROBINDO



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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

THE PERSONAL AND THE IMPERSONAL

AS you go up in your consciousness towards the origin of things you come finally at the end of things: you are beyond the names and forms that make up the universe, beyond even the subtle names and forms at the topmost. You arrive at something formless, impersonal, unthinkable, unique, infinite and eternal. It is at best a vast force or a state of consciousness. When you come in contact with it, you lose your personal form, your separate individuality and become the featureless absolute. Many religions and philosophies consider this status to be the supreme, the highest and the origin of things. In reality, however, it is not the end of things nor the supreme status. You can rise further beyond. Your consciousness enters into the formless and impersonal and merges its separate existence there and then emerges again; it envisages a reality which is not formless but has a form, it is not impersonality but a Person, with which or with whom you

* Based on Mother's Talks

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can have a personal relation unlike the relation or lack of relation with the Impersonal. But this form beyond the formless is not like the forms of the inferior consciousness: it is the Form of forms. And it is not a person like a human being or even a divine being or god, but an essential personality, the Person of persons. It has not the limitation or exclusiveness of ego-bounded individuality (even the gods are ego-bounded); it has a kind of fluid boundedness or outline which is recognizable as that of a definite Person, but it has not the fixity or rigidity of lower forms.

And yet to arrive at this supreme Person, to come in contact with Him, it is necessary to pass through and have the experience of the formless impersonal infinity. For that breaks the inferior moulds, the narrow egoistic formations which are only aberrations or obscure images of the true Person.

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Somewhat on the same line the vital too has to proceed to transform itself. It must get rid of its ignorant and violent impulses, its obscure formations: it must be thoroughly cleansed and purified. For that it must learn to be quiet and silent—absolutely still and passive; and in that quiet passivity to feel, to be conscious of the Divine Presence, to be saturated with it. When once that is done, it is called upon to come out and take part in active life. Normally, however, the tendency is, when one has withdrawn and lived an inward quieted life, on coming back to outer life, to turn to the old accustomed ways and reactions; one falls back into the old groove of the consciousness. The vital should then make the experience and the realisation of the Divine Presence dynamic so that it may be a living reality; the vital must be conscious of it in the midst of all activities, not merely in the inward state. The energy of the vital must be put out into a complete and perfected living, but it must not run into old moulds and take up the habitual modes; with the constant sense of the Divine, the everpresent truth and beauty of the Divine's consciousness, the vital will possess a new life and create a new pattern of living.

"I HAVE NOTHING, I AM NOTHING"

The state is that of utter commonplaceness. The feeling that I am doing Yoga, that I am something and have a special work to do, that something

HERE OR ELSEWHERE

has to be achieved, that life has a purpose etc. etc. all that has left and left a blank; a void inside and an absolutely mechanical automaton outside. I do the most ordinary things of life, as any other common man, like the routine work of a machine; I know nothing and have no impulse to know or to plan as to what I should do, how I am to move or why is it all like this. A great tranquillity and silence possesses the whole being. There is no "I", no person to refer to in the consciousness: individuality has been totally abolished, a sweep of universality passes through the consciousness and makes it as it were a no man's land. The mind has laid down its burden and says it is free now and obedient to the call that may come to it. The vital too submits its adherence and awaits the order: it has no inclination or choice of its own. The physical is likewise wholly docile.

This state of supreme blankness and passivity borders on the experience of illusion—the illusoriness of the world and the vanity or hollowness of life. Creation does seem like an empty shell, with no meaning or purpose and no real truth of existence even: it is a shadow play that rests on nothing and vanishes into nothing. The great exponents of Illusoriness must have had an experience of this kind and considered therefore that—Nothingness—as the ultimate truth and mystery of existence.

Now when all sense of personality—not only the sense but even the fact itself—had totally dissolved, the voice of the Supreme Divine was heard and His impulsion recorded. The *Prayers and Meditations* hereafter were written through such an impulsion; it was truly automatic writing—the instrument did not know what it was writing and even did not understand the meaning of the recorded words, it was merely a copyist, it looked at the writing as a third person would.

The whole being in all its parts acted thus like a recording or transferring agency. It was under such conditions—at the zero point of human personality and consciousness—that the instrument which so long lived apart and behind, concerned with itself more or less, was made to come forward and take up the work that the Divine demanded of it. The vessel that was completely empty, a universal and transcendental shape, came gradually to be filled, with the Divine's own will and its own formations.

HERE OR ELSEWHERE

It is easy and comfortable to go within and in an inner consciousness

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find and maintain a union, even a close union with the Divine. It is because of such a state of peace and bliss that many, nay, most who go there do not want to come back, to normal life upon this earth. And teachers, great or small, almost invariably, have taught that in the end it is best like that, and perhaps the only thing to do under the circumstances. For this life and this earth mean the very opposite of that inner heaven and that highest good. But some are not given this comfortable solution of the difficulty. They are asked to turn back and live the life of the earth. They are not allowed to remain cosy in a narrow room and be busy always with themselves alone. Indeed, is it not narrow egoism to seek only one's own salvation? When one has saved himself, is it not his duty—the logical outcome and implication of his personal freedom—that he should seek to help others in their salvation? Such was in fact the attitude of the Amitabha Buddha.

A house is on fire. It has a tarred roof. One can easily understand the fury of the fire. Some inmates who were trapped have managed to come out in time, although somewhat bruised and scalded. But there were others, some children, left inside. One of those who came out rushes back again through the flames and comes and goes till all are saved. He is badly burnt, he has risked his life: he did not mind and could not remain at a safe distance. He could not be contented with saving himself, which was to be sure a sufficient gain in one respect. This soul had a consciousness of his wider self.

In the same way, there are souls that have emerged out of the fire of earthly life and are enjoying the safety and security of the heavens; but they have been called to come back into the world, add to the experience of the tranquil above the experience of the trouble below. Surely it increases the scope of their consciousness. But to turn upon the world means also to re-enter into ignorance, for this world means ignorance, as it is, it is nothing but ignorance. The role then of one who returns is once more to embrace ignorance, but with a view to bringing into it the light and bliss that he gained from above, permeating the stuff of the present world with the substance of the higher consciousness. It is a sacrifice demanded of him, thus to abandon the eternal felicity of the high heavens—the unbroken union with the Divine above—and to enter into the depths of "this great perilous world": but this is a privilege too, to bring solace to the afflicted, the transforming light to obscure souls, the radiant energy to inert earth. It is a high privilege for which the luminous soul is thankful: he modestly

WHEN IMPERFECTION IS GREATER THAN PERFECTION

accepts a gift of grace from the Supreme. He accepts the Ignorance and offers it: he lays it at the feet of the Supreme so that it may be transmuted into light—light here below. His own role is that of a modest intermediary.

WHEN IMPERFECTION IS GREATER THAN PERFECTION

A perfected consciousness is attained in the highest status of being, when it is full of light and delight, peace and purity, one with the Divine Consciousness. Such a consciousness, when it comes down upon earth in its original unmixed clarity, lives as a foreign element and has no real contact with the world; it can have only a very indirect influence upon men and things. If the perfect, the divine consciousness has to be truly effective, has to change human and world nature, it must put on partially at least that nature; it must share in the imperfection of ignorance so that it can show how that imperfection can be dealt with and transformed. The Divine has to become human, even the ordinary human, in a sense, in the outward instrumental aspect, to a greater or lesser degree as needed, so that He may come in living contact with the obscure lower consciousness and put His light into it and gradually purify and illumine it. If, however, the consciousness retains its fullness of power and light and makes its appearance as such, it may dazzle and overwhelm, as a meteor miracle, but leave nothing substantial behind. This is what has happened in the past of man's history. The saints and sages, the greatest and the most genuine among them, mostly dwelt apart from humanity in consciousness and even away from human contact; the earth could not profit wholly by their example.

Therefore the Mother says in her *Prayers and Meditations* that having gone beyond all desires still she had to live in the midst of desires; she had no choice of her own, no preference, no attachment, no need of anything, yet she was put in the conditions of very ordinary life, the normal human life; she had to deal with the common man, handle the small insignificant objects of material existence. In one part of her being she had to identify herself with ignorance and obscurity, so much so that even the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness—the conscient and the inconscient—was for a time obliterated. Naturally, the inmost being in its inner self remained always calm, luminous, inviolable, but it put around

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itself this body of ordinary nature to meet its ordinary reactions and through them gradually to uplift and train it to manifest and incarnate the inmost divine.

The gods are perfect; but, it is said, they have to become men, come down upon earth and assume human proportions—that is, imperfections,—if they wish to progress further, attain still higher levels of consciousness. For, the gods are perfect each in its own limited and well-defined and therefore unchangeable type; but man means an aspiring soul, that is to say, infinity—his very imperfection is a sign and symbol of ever greater possibility; the fluidity of his nature means an opportunity.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SOUL

The individual has a soul. Likewise a collection of individuals, a group too has a soul. When persons habitually meet together for a certain purpose, they form a set or society and gradually tend to develop a common consciousness which is the beginning of a soul. At school, they who read together, the class, they who play together, the team, all who live and move together inspired by the same or similar impulses and ideas possess a rudimentary soul. In the same way, a bigger group, the nation has also a soul, each its own according to its nature, tradition and culture. Even a continent has a soul. One can speak of the soul consciousness of Europe, of Asia or of Africa. Indeed each cell of an organism has a consciousness of its own; it may be said to be the unit individual consciousness. Many such cells combine to form the organism, the individual (who in this way may be viewed as a composite or collective being). Many individuals form the family—each family with its group consciousness (whence the idea of *kuladharmā*, the genius of the family or the tradition and stamp of a Royal House). Many families formed the tribe, here too each with its particular consciousness. And then families and tribes have formed the modern nation, each one a distinct and almost a well-developed soul. The grouping continues to enlarge and we have the many nations combining to form the human group as a whole; humanity too has its own consciousness and its own soul. There is no limit to the volume or dimension of the group. The earth has its soul consciousness, even as the sun or a star or any other planet. The solar system or a galactic system too is moved by its own secret consciousness.

THE WONDER OF IT ALL

THE WONDER OF IT ALL

The ordinary consciousness takes for granted the things that exist as they are. It does not question; it finds everything very natural and as a matter of course. It sees and expects to see the same old familiar things repeated and is not struck by any extraordinary note in them. That is the unconsciousness of the ordinary consciousness. But when you begin to be conscious, when you look about and gaze at things, you awake, as it were, from sleep, and begin to question, to wonder: why it is like this, how is it so, what is it, to what purpose etc. etc. Normally you see the sun rises, rain falls, earth rotates—but you do not spend a thought over any of these objects or happenings, except so far as they are useful or simple nuisance. But when there is a light in you and you become conscious, conscious of yourself and of things around you, every thing acquires an importance, a sense and you are full of wonder, wondering at a wonderful creation. The more you advance, the more the light grows in you, all the more your wonder increases. As your awareness increases, your interest too increases. A new beauty surrounds, flows out of every object and event. You do not take things for granted and let them pass mechanically, but meet every one of them as a guest, with whom you wish to make acquaintance and be familiar, each one having a message for you and yourself something to deliver. That is a source of inexhaustible delight and of ever increasing knowledge.

CORRECTION

The two poems published in our last issue
are not by Sri Aurobindo—*The Editor*.

SONNETS

I

MOMENTS

IF perfect moments on the peak of things,
These tops of knowledge, greatness, ecstasy,
Are only moments, this too enough could be.
I have assumed the rapid flaming wings
Of souls whom the Ignorance black-robed Nature brings
And the frail littleness of mortality
Can bind not always; a high sovereignty
Makes them awhile creation's radiant kings.

These momentary upliftings of the soul
Prepare the spirit's glorious permanence.
The peace of God, a great still transience¹
Is now my being's boundless atmosphere.
All parts are gathered into a timeless whole;
All moments last in an eternal Year.

29-9-1939

2-10-1939

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ a great calm immanence

SONNETS

II

THE COSMIC SPIRIT

I AM a single Self all Nature fills.
Immeasurable, unmoved the Witness sits:
He is the silence brooding on her hills;
The circling motion of her cosmic might.

I have broken the limits of embodied mind
And am no more the figure of a soul.
The burning galaxies are in me outlined;
The universe is my stupendous whole.

My life is the life of village and continent,
I am earth's agony and her throbs of bliss;
I share all creatures' sorrow and content
And feel the passage of every stab and kiss.

Impassive, I bear each act and thought and mood;
Time traverses my hushed infinitude.

15-10-1939

5-11-1939

SRI AUROBINDO

HYMN TO INDRA*

1. Come, O Indra, thou takest rapture by all the bodily parts of this Matter; full of the great, setting thyself to it by thy force.

2. Increase thy strength, and do ye when the nectar is expressed create rapture for Indra the taker of joy, activity for the doer of our actions.

3. Rejoice, O swift of mood, with praises that awake delight, O thou all-doer; attach thyself to these outpourings.

4. When thou comest not to them, O Indra, thy voices laugh up to thee seeking unfulfilled satisfaction to their lover and lord.

5. Excite entirely, O Indra, that manifold highest ecstasy below,—that Is of thee which is universal being and supreme.

6. Us too in that, O Indra, wholly excite to bliss; make us full of strong ecstasy and victorious strength, O thou brilliant in steadfast force.

7. So do thou dispose to us, O Indra, wide knowledge full of light, full of substance, in nature of that greatness, enduring all our life unimpaired.

8. Dispose to us knowledge of the large, a brilliance of utterly forceful steadfastness and, Indra, those rapturous masteries.

9. Declare ye with your words Indra of the Substance, lord of substance, full of the rik (knowledge); as he goeth we call on him for expansion of our being.

10. In every pouring of the nectar for capacity, of the large and increaser of the large, for Indra proceeds.

SRI AUROBINDO

* Rig Veda, I. 9; Rishi: Madhucchandas

PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS*

VI

THE TRIPLE BRAHMAN

PARABRAHMAN is now on the way to phenomenal manifestation; the

Absolute Shakespeare of Existence, the infinite *Kavi*; Thinker and Poet, is, by the mere existence of the eternal creative force *Maya*, about to shadow forth a world of living realities out of Himself which have yet no independent existence. He becomes phenomenally a Creator, and Container of the Universe, though really He is what He ever was, absolute and unchanged. To understand why and how the Universe appears what it is, we have deliberately to abandon our scientific standpoint of transcendental knowledge and speaking the language of Nescience, represent the Absolute as limiting Itself, the One becoming the Many, the pure ultra-Spiritual unrefining Itself into the mental and material. We are like the modern astrologer who, knowing perfectly well that the earth moves round the sun, must yet persist in speaking of the Sun as moving and standing in this part of the heavens or that other, because he has to do with the relative *positions* of the Sun and planets with regard to men living in the earth and not with the ultimate astronomical realities.

From this point of view we have to begin with a dualism of the thing and its shadow, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, commonly called spirit and matter. Properly speaking, the distinction is illusory, since there is nothing which is exclusively spirit or exclusively matter, nor can the Universe be strictly parcelled out between these; from the point of view of Reality spirit and matter are not different but the same. We may say, if we like, that the entire Universe is matter and spirit does not exist; we may say, if we like that the entire Universe is spirit and matter does not exist. In either case we are

*From old writings

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merely multiplying words without counsel, ignoring the patent fact visible through the Universe that both spirit and matter exist and are indissolubly welded, precisely because they are simply one thing viewed from two sides. The distinction between them is one of the primary dualisms and a first result of the great Ignorance. Maya works out in name and form as material; Maya works out in the conceiver of name and form as spiritual. Purusha is the great principle or force whose presence is necessary to awake creative energy and send it out working into and on shapes of matter. For this reason Purusha is the name usually applied to the conditioned Brahman in His manifestations; but it is always well to remember that the Primal Existence turned towards manifestation has a double aspect, Male and Female, positive and negative. He is the origin of the birth of things and He is the receptacle of the birth and it is to the Male aspect of Himself that the word Purusha predominatingly applies. The image often applied to these relations is that of the man casting his seed into the woman; his duty is merely to originate the seed and deposit it, but it is the woman's duty to cherish the seed, develop it, bring it forth and start it on its career of manifested life. The seed, says the Upanishad, is the self of the Male; it is spirit, and being cast into the Female, Prakriti, it becomes one with her and therefore does her no hurt; spirit takes the shaping appearance of matter and does not break up the appearances of matter, but develops under their law. The Man and the Woman, universal Adam and Eve, are really one and each is incomplete without the other, barren without the other, inactive without the other. Purusha the Male, God, is that side of the One which gives the impulse toward phenomenal existence; Prakriti the Female, Nature, is that side which is and evolves the material of phenomenal existence; both of them are therefore unborn and eternal. The Male is Purusha, he who lurks in the Wide; the Female is Prakriti, the working of the Male, and sometimes called Rayi, the universal movement emanating from the quiescent Male. Purusha is therefore imaged as the Enjoyer, Prakriti as the enjoyed; Purusha as the Witness, Prakriti as the phenomena he witnesses; Purusha as the *getter* or father of things, Prakriti as their *bearer* or mother. And there are many other images the Upanishad employs, Purusha, for instance, symbolising Himself in the Sun, the father of life, and Prakriti in the Earth, the bearer of life. It is necessary thus clearly to define Purusha from the first in order to avoid confusion in endeavouring to grasp the development of Maya as the Upanishads describe it.

Parabrahman in the course of evolving phenomena enters into three

PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS

states or conditions which are called in one passage his three habitations and, by a still more suggestive figure, His three states of dream. The first condition is called *avyakta*, the state previous to manifestation, in which all things are involved, but in which nothing is expressed or imaged, the state of ideality, undifferentiated but pregnant of differentiation, just as the seed is pregnant of the bark, sap, pith, fibre, leaf, fruit and flower and all else that unites to make the conception of a tree; just as the protoplasm is pregnant of all the extraordinary variations of animal life. It is, in its objective aspect, the seed-state of things. The objective possibility, and indeed necessity of such a condition of the whole Universe, cannot be denied; for this is the invariable method of development which the operations of Nature show to us. Evolution does not mean that out of protoplasm as a material so many organisms have been created or added by an outside power, but that they have been developed out of the protoplasm; and if developed, they were already there existent and have been manifested by some power dwelling and working in the protoplasm itself. But open up the protoplasm, as you will, you will not find in it the rudiments of the organs and organisms it will hereafter develop. So also though the protoplasm and everything else is evolved out of ether, yet no symptoms of them would yield themselves up to an analytical research into ether. The organs and organisms are in the protoplasm, the leaf, flower, fruit in the seed and all forms in the ether from which they evolve, in an undifferentiated condition and therefore defy the method of analysis which is confined to the discovery of differences. This is the state called involution. So also ether itself, gross or subtle, and all that evolves from ether is involved in *Avyakta*; they are present but they can never be discovered there because there they are undifferentiated. Plato's world of ideas is a confused attempt to arrive at this condition of things, confused because it unites two incompatible things, the conditions of *Avyakta* and those of the next state presided over by *Hiranyagarbha*.

The question then arises, what is the subjective aspect of Parabrahman in the state of *Avyakta*? The organs and organisms are evolved out of protoplasm and forms out of ether by a power which resides and works in them, and that power must be intelligent consciousness unmanifested; *must*, because it is obviously a power that can plan, arrange and suit means to ends; *must* because otherwise the law of subtler involving grosser cannot obtain. If matter is all, then from the point of view of matter, the gross is more real because more palpable than the subtle and unreality cannot develop reality; it is intelligent consciousness and nothing else we know of that not only has

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the power of containing at one and the same time the gross and the subtle, but does consistently proceed in its method of creation or evolution from vagueness to precision, from no form to form and from simple form to complex form. If the discoveries of Science mean anything and are not a chaos, an illusion or a chimera, they can only mean the existence of an intelligent consciousness present and working in all things. Parabrahman therefore is present subjectively even in the condition of Avyakta no less than in the other conditions as intelligent consciousness and therefore as bliss.

For the rest, we are driven to the use of metaphors, and since metaphors must be used, one will do as well as another, for none can be entirely applicable. Let us then image Avyakta as an egg, the golden egg of the Puranas full of the waters of undifferentiated existence and divided into two halves, the upper or luminous half filled with the upper waters of subjective ideation, the lower or tenebrous half with the lower waters of objective ideation. In the upper half Purusha is concealed as the final cause of things; it is there that is formed the idea of undifferentiated, eternal, infinite, universal Spirit. In the lower half he is concealed as Prakriti, the material cause of things; it is there that is formed the idea of undifferentiated, eternal, infinite, universal matter, with the implications Time, Space and Causality involved in its infinity. It is represented mythologically by Vishnu on the causal Ocean sitting on the hood of Ananta, the infinite snake whose endless folds are Time, and are also Space and are also Causality, these three being fundamentally one,—a Trinity. In the upper half Parabrahman is still utterly Himself, but with a Janus face, one side contemplating the Absolute Reality which He is, the other envisaging Maya, looking on the endless procession of her works not yet as a reality, but as a phantasmagoria. In the lower half if we may use a daring metaphor, Parabrahman forgets Himself. He is subjectively in the state corresponding to utter sleep or trance from which when a man awakes he can only realise that he was and that he was in a state of bliss resulting from the complete absence of limitation; that he was conscious in that state, follows from his realisation of blissful existence, but the consciousness is not a part of his realisation. This concealment of Consciousness is a characteristic of the seed-state of things and it is what is meant by saying that when Parabrahman enters into matter as Prakriti, He forgets Himself.

Of such a condition, the realisations of consciousness do not return to us, we can have no particular information. The Yogin passes through it on his way to the Eternal, but he hastens to this goal and does not linger in it; not

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only so, but absorption in this stage is greatly dreaded except as a temporary necessity; for if the soul finally leaves the body in that condition, it must recommence the cycle of evolution all over again; for it has identified itself with the seed state of things and must follow the nature of Avyakta which is to start on the motions of Evolution by the regular order of universal manifestation. This absorption is called the Prakriti *laya* or absorption in Prakriti. The Yogin can enter into this state of complete Nescience or Avidya and remain there for centuries, but if by any chance his body is preserved and he returns to it, he brings nothing back to the store of our knowledge on this side of Avyakta.

Parabrahman in the state of Avyakta Purusha is known as *Prājña*, the Master of *Prajñā*, Eternal Wisdom or Providence, for it is He that He orders and marshals before Himself like a great poet planning a wonderful masterpiece in his mind, the eternal laws of existence and the unending procession of the worlds. Vidya and Avidya are here perfectly balanced, the former still and quiescent though comprehensive, the latter not yet at active work, waiting for the command, let there be darkness. And then the veil of darkness, Vidya seems to be in abeyance, and from the disturbance of the balance results inequality; then out of the darkness Eternal Wisdom streams forth to its task of creation and Hiranyagarbha, the Golden Child, is born....

SRI AUROBINDO

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA*

(*A translation*)

CHAPTER V

URJOONA

THOU declarest the renunciation of works, O Krishna, and again thou declarest Yoga in works. Which one alone of these twain is the better, this tell me clearly, leaving no doubt behind.

KRISHNA

Renunciation of works, or Yoga in works, both of them make for the soul's highest welfare, but of these two Yoga in works is distinguished above renunciation of works. Know him for the perpetual Sannyasin, who neither hates nor desires aught, for the mind that rises above the dualities, O strong-armed, is easily and happily released from its bondage. It is children who talk of Sankhya and Yoga as distinct and different, and not the learned; he who cleaveth wholly to even one of these findeth the fruit of both. To the high heaven whereto the Sankhyas win, the men of Yoga go also, and he who seeth Sankhya and Yoga as one seeth indeed. But renunciation, without Yoga, O great of arm, is very difficult to arrive at; and the sage that hath Yoga travelleth quickly to God. When a man hath Yoga, the Self of him is purified from obscuration, he is master of the Self and victor over the senses; he whose Self has become one with the self of all created things, though he do works, can receive no defilement. The Yogin sees the reality of things and thinks, "Truly I do nothing at all"; yea, when he sees or hears or touches, when he smells and when he tastes, in his going

* From old writings

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

and in his sleeping and in his breathing, whether he talk, whether he put out or take in, whether he close his eyes or open them, still he holds, "Lo, 'tis but the senses that move in the fields of the senses". When a man doeth, reposing all his works on the Eternal and abandoning attachment, sin cannot stay in his soul even as water on the leaf of a lotus. With their body, mind and understanding self and with pure and unaffected senses the Yogins, relinquishing attachment, do works for the cleansing of the Self. The soul that has Yoga abandons the fruit of its works, and gains instead a confident and utter peace; but the soul that has not Yoga clings to the fruit of its works, and by the working of desire it falleth into bondage. When a man is master of his self, and has renounced all works in his heart, then the embodied spirit sitteth at ease in his nine-gated city, neither doing nor causing to be done. The Lord createth not works nor the authorship of works for His people, neither yoketh He them to the fruits of their works; 'tis the nature in a man that is busy and taketh its own course. The Lord taketh to himself the sin of none, neither accepteth He the righteousness of any; but the wisdom of living beings is clouded over with Nescience and 'tis by this that these are bewildered. Of those who by Knowledge have destroyed the nescience of the Self, Wisdom riseth like the sun and lighteth up that Self of All. Then they perceive Him alone and are Self of Him, and to Him consecrated in faith and all for Him; the revolving wheel clutches them not any more because Wisdom has washed them pure of all stain. The Brahmin endowed with learning and modest culture, the cow, the elephant and the very dog and the Pariah none touches, all these the wise regard with equal eyes. Even in their human life they have conquered this creation whose minds have taken root in that divine Equality, for the Eternal also is without a defect and looketh on all his creatures with equal eyes; therefore in the Eternal they have their root. He is not overjoyed when he getteth what is of pleasant growth, nor is he troubled when he tasteth of bitterness; his reason is steadfast and he subjects not himself to delusion but knoweth the eternal and in him abideth. His soul clings not to the touches of outward things but what happiness he finds he finds in the Self; therefore his soul is made one in Yoga with Eternal Brahman, the happiness he tastes does not cease or perish. For the enjoyments that are born of touch and contact are very wombs of misery, they begin and they end; the wise man taketh no delight in these. For he who even on this earth and before his release from this mortal body hath strength to stand up in the speed and rush of wrath and lust, he is the happy man. That man is the Yogin whose bliss is within and

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his delight and ease are inward; him an inner light illumines, and he goeth to cessation in the Brahman for he becometh Brahman. Rishis from whom all stain and darkness have faded away, who have cut Doubt away from their hearts and are masters of Self, whose whole delight and work is to do good to all created things—these win to cessation in the Eternal. The strivers after perfection, the governed souls who are delivered from the grip of wrath and desire, lo, the Paradise of cessation in Brahman liveth all about them, for they have knowledge of the Self within. Keeping the touches of outward things from his soul and concentrating sight between his eyebrows, making equal the outbreath and the inbreath as they move within the nostrils, master of his senses and mind and reason, who utterly desireth salvation, desire and wrath and fear have departed from him for ever; verily, he is already a released and delivered soul. He knows me for the One that feasteth on man's sacrifice and his austerities, the mighty Lord of all the worlds and the heart's friend of all creatures, and knowing, he travelleth to the Peace.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE IGNORANCE*

IT is important from the outset to clarify our understanding on the truth of Supermind,—that which the ancients termed the Truth-consciousness,—so that we may focus our aim wholly on that all-comprehensive Reality. For Supermind now presents itself as the supreme Guide by which we can enter into the fullness and potency of the Divine Consciousness. This necessitates first a shift or displacement in our own central attitude, from the habitual egocentric outlook, in order to break finally from the revolving fixity which represents mind's present reluctance to change and open itself to that infinitely greater Power. Since Supermind is not the mental consciousness but above and separate, though yet secretly connected with it, a decisive step, a complete re-orientation on the part of the individual, has eventually to be made, in order to realise and become wholly convinced of its Reality. The ancient Seers, traditionally associated with the Indian Vedic Age, discovered the bridge in a dynamic spiritual knowledge, which gave them a bold and direct entry into the heart of Truth, sweeping beyond all mental preconceptions and ideas of what this Truth should be. We now realise however, more practically than the ancients did, that this spiritual knowledge is not merely for individual salvation or liberation from the world, but has to be used as the basis for the integral transformation of the earth nature, by which the individual can become more and more a radiating centre of light and enlightenment. It is for man therefore to give himself wholly and become the divine instrument in this endeavour.

By a detachment from the ego-centre one begins to see the true limitation of mind. Even the highest reach of mind in its conception of the Absolute (which is the critical test of our limitation of knowing), can only arrive at an ultimate duality which we figure in the conjoined Personal and

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Impersonal Reality. In order to realise the true Unity and Oneness of the Absolute, we have either to silence the mind or permit a higher Light to penetrate its workings and uplift its vision. By this means the fundamental Nature of the Absolute has been discerned in its pristine purity as a three-told Reality,—an infinite Existence, infinite Consciousness and infinite Delight of Being. These exist together as the inseparable strands of the divine Unity; and it is this Unity that has entered into Creation as the individual and indivisible essence, while at the same time it sustains and upholds all Cosmos (as the creative Power), and yet ever remains in its own Purity above Cosmos—the transcendent Reality. These are the triple statuses of the Divine that we experience in the world as God the Supreme; Nature the executive Force, and the individual being as the instrument of growth and development. On the idealised level of our thought these triple statuses have become the three-fold perfections of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. But by the penetrating light and calm of the soul-being the interwoven triple strands of the Divine Nature are seen more truly in the Oneness of the Supreme, all-pervading, all-encompassing and immanent in all beings. The duality of our ordinary mentalised outlook is merely a simplification or partial grasp of the real trinity, and springs from the limitation of mind and its fundamental dividing nature. Thus, for example, in our ordinary outlook on the universe, when we exclude God from our conception, we merely fix ourselves in that duality of opposites where man and Nature are ever condemned to stand against each other as contending and antagonistic opponents. It is only the admission of the third all-embracing principle that can heal the duality and transform it into the true Oneness of the divine Omnipresence. Duality in fact is the beginning of division and fragmentation (which is a necessary phase in the evolutionary ascent), but without the intervention of a higher co-ordinating Principle, this process of division and sub-division can only lead to an eventual disintegration and annihilation. Triplicity on the other hand is the true basis of reconciliation and harmony, and is the natural integral foundation for the complete divine order of being and awareness.

Here we see the essential difference between the nature of mind, and that of the Consciousness beyond mind; the one based on a fundamental duality and the other on the all-embracing triple Nature of Reality. It is important therefore from the very beginning to found our own thought and knowledge on this fundamental triple relation. We then begin to comprehend the true inter-relatedness of all the multiple diversities that con-

stitute Cosmos; for this is the key to the inner secret harmony and oneness pervading and embracing all things, as well as revealing their transcendent Origin. The present indecisiveness of science is indeed largely due to the habitual duality of our mentalised seeing, of which a typical example is the separate conceptions of field and particle structure. It is only when we consider the proper inter-relation of these two concepts that we find that both the resistant particle centre (which represents the uttermost compression of Energy), and the expansive field (which represents the interchange and uttermost extension of Energy), are part of one continuous system contained and held by a Force that interconnects and at the same time constitutes the essential thread of each. We see then that the nature of this universal Force can only be that of a Conscious Power directed towards a supreme Harmony; and this is the real key to the relation of what we see as two separate entities. It is as though we were viewing the spaces of a grating (separate and disjointed segments of space) as the sole reality, and ignoring the fact that the spaces themselves exist only by virtue of a continuous medium that surrounds them. For what we habitually see as separate phenomena are really embraced by a greater Reality, a Force or Energy which is in fact the manifest expression of the true creative Power or Consciousness-Force of the Divine. Thus whether we observe this Force as it acts in and between the minutest particles of matter, or holding together worlds as one whole system, it is ever possessed by a Consciousness,—that of the divine creative Power itself. It is because of this all-pervading and indivisible Presence of the divine Consciousness-Force that we are able to discover a harmonious law underlying and integrating all relations; and this alone explains the fundamental co-ordination and inter-relatedness of all cosmic phenomena. It is impossible, therefore, without the knowledge of the triple relation and ultimate nature of things, for us to gain a comprehensive vision of Reality, which is the key to our understanding of the complex cosmic Nature, both visible and occult.

The indeterminability that we find at the centre of matter is only the open admission of mind's insufficiency to grasp the integral truth of it. Since man is confronted on all sides by an ultimate duality, it does not follow that oneness does not exist as the central core of Reality. Rather we have to learn to open our mind to a more comprehensive zone of knowing; which we are repeatedly assured by the spiritual pathfinders does exist beyond the habitual ego attachments. This opening of mind demands, as we have already suggested, a change of centre in our own outlook and seeing, a

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shift of consciousness from the ego restriction to the true centre of our being where the embryonic light-seed of soul resides. It is this latter which has to grow and transform our nature in accordance with the higher Law of the supra-Nature. It is because the mind in its total absorption and activity in the lower Nature is as yet unaware of this higher Reality, that the individual as the growing-point of the evolutionary ascent is compelled to make the effort to surpass his present limited mental sphere by establishing contact with his inner soul-being (as the starting-point and nucleus of a higher growth), in order to be able to expand from that psychic centre into the universality and become one of the increasing centres of illumined consciousness in the world. By stepping outside the narrow orbit of the ego, by the opening of soul and reaching towards a higher light-receptive plane of mind, we discover the key in the realisation of a greater Reality which is the divine Truth-consciousness. When the embryonic inner self begins to unfold there is at first perhaps a gleam, a penetrating pin-point of light that expands, or may be a sudden stream of elevating illumination, and by it one comes to face directly the true Self, the origin of all selves and beings. It was because of this powerful realisation, obliterating and overpowering all our habitual personal self-assertions, that the ancient mystics spoke of that cosmic and supra-cosmic Self as the one, and even the sole, Reality. The realisation of the Self became a pass-word, particularly in Indian thought, to mean the attainment of the transcendent Consciousness. It became the symbol of one's true identity with the Highest in which the narrow personal self is completely merged in and united with the Reality of the original Self or ever-existent Being. In that all-absorbing experience only the transcendent Self remains as the all-Reality. Yet the individual by thus opening and submerging his self-confined 'I'-ness does not really lose his true individuality, but rather by elevating his mental self and joining it to the vaster Reality—its true Origin,—he realises not separateness but the enveloping Oneness of all things and beings. What we really lose (and this no doubt causes the pain), is the attachment of the ego and the enclosed protection it has given us, shielding us like a stout integument from the vastness of the cosmic Reality. The reaction of the ego is due to the fact that it persists in interposing its own familiar viewpoint as the more secure anchorage of the individual being and outlook, against the unfamiliarity and seeming unreality of the Vastness beyond. This intervention however, has to be seen in its true perspective as an impediment to our progress, if we are to overcome it. We have to be wholly cognisant

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of the ego's real subordinate status, as the instrument of the divine Power, and not a 'self-existent being.

The Absolute is the Source of all things,—Impersonal in its Vastness,—while at the same time it has become all things, though it is by no means bounded by any or even all of its creations and emanations. It is also the essence of all things revealing itself immanently to us as the One who is the Many, the infinite and many-centred Person who is at the same time the Lord of Creation. It is through this latter conception that we reach a more intimate and personal relation with the Absolute than that of the pure impersonal Vast. Yet both aspects, the impersonal Source and the intimately related Person, are not only together real but are insolubly One. A seeing beyond mind has to intervene here if we are to become wholly conscious of that all-pervading Oneness. What mind seizes as the ultimate duality of the One Existence is in fact a partial actuality of the All-Being, a subordinate Truth that shows us the point where Creation or Manifestation begins, where the One enters into and becomes the Many while yet ever remaining the One Supreme. Yet even the highest Truth of the Absolute, that which eludes mind's grasp, is not something aloof from the world and creation; for within the manifestation itself the integral Wholeness of the Absolute is to be found,—as the real essence and nucleus of the individual being. We do not need to seek therefore beyond our own earthly existence, or to escape from the world in order to realise the freedom of the Infinite that is unbounded by the limitation of Creation. By going inwards and immersing ourselves in the calm beyond the silenced mind we realise the true Self or all-Being. This indeed is a decisive stage in our evolutionary ascent and development of consciousness, when we become aware of the Silence and the utter Vastness of Spirit; for it is the wide awakening of the individual consciousness to its true divine Origin. Yet this is no retreat from the world's problems, rather is it a withdrawal in order to gain a firmer and more integral grasp on them. Neither is it a short cut to personal liberation, but the ground and basis for perfection in our worldly work, of which the first step is to cut oneself away from the bondage of ego by uniting with the Infinite. We have to remember always that the primary aim of the spiritual evolution, of which the earth is the base, is to establish the fullest connection between the spirit and the earth nature itself. The realisation of the transcendent consciousness is thus a necessary instigating phase in order to bring the inner silence and calm into the actuality of one's life and being, and through it establish the firm connection with

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the higher spiritual Reality. For unless we first silence and still the unceasing revolving of mind and quieten the incessant pulls of the ego-desire in us, we cannot in this mesh of distraction become aware of the truth of anything beyond mind and the present imperfect existence. The inner or higher silence brings us our first convincing and reconciling experience of that higher Reality, and this must form the essential basis of our widening into the cosmic and supra-cosmic consciousness.

What we have referred to as the Divine Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo has more precisely termed Supermind, which is the Consciousness that belongs to the divine creative Power, the central cosmic Matrix and creative Origin of all beings and becomings. This is the central creative Consciousness of Cosmos to which man can open and is the real dynamic key to his higher ascent. It is a Consciousness that embraces the Unity and totality, even while it enters into the diversity, fragmentation and individual separate-ness of things. In our present restricted outlook we only catch glimpses of this Unity mainly through a vague intuitive sense, which is really a first stirring of the true intuition appearing as a "feeling-into" things but without the calm, wideness and detachment of the inner soul-consciousness. Through this partial opening however, we become aware of a faculty which, fully awakened, can perceive the underlying truth and integral reality of things. By following to its source this immature stirring, we discover its root in the psychic or soul being. It is the growth and emergence of the latter that must necessarily form the central pivot of a new consciousness centred in the truth of the Divine Reality and its omnipresent Power.

What is meant by the term Ignorance in respect to the present state of the world, is that a partial and imperfect emergence of Consciousness has been reached which has yet further to open into the fullness and perfection of its divine Source; and man is here the growing-point in this evolutionary unfoldment. In the cosmic Creation the fundamental ground that was established for the upward ascent is that which has been termed the Inconscience and represents the uttermost obscuration and involution of pure Consciousness in its opposite pole of existence. Inconscience thus formed the basis and starting-point for the evolution of Consciousness in terms of material substance, bringing forth life and the mental being, and eventually seeking to manifest the spiritual reality through the evolved psychic being. The Ignorance in this dynamic emergence is the present intermediary state that Consciousness has reached in the world, and forms the natural basis, the opposite pole of Unknowing, out of which the divine Knowledge can progressively take root

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in a living and enlightened being. The Ignorance is the ground or field for the present partial emergence to grow into the fullness of manifest Consciousness. Thus the imperfection of the world is no cause for escape from the travail and labour needed to be done by both individual and collectivity to prepare for the spiritual transformation of earth through the power of Knowledge. For the Ignorance is a veil, an obscurity due to the present condition of Mind's incompleteness, whose sovereignty in the world has effectively shut out the Light, Truth and Bliss of the Supernature from the earth-life. It is only by Mind's growth through the individual centres that the opening to the Light can be made, severing the veil of Ignorance,¹ so that the divine Truth itself can penetrate directly into the inconscience of earth, awakening therein the original Consciousness from its latent self-absorbed sleep. This rupture of the veil between Mind and Supermind is indeed the crucial juncture (towards which Sri Aurobindo worked and opened the way) for inaugurating the spiritual transformation of the world. For this severance indicates on the one hand, the individual's readiness to accept and become the instrument of this transformation, and on the other it is a direct opening for the divine Light and Power to enter in its fullness into the life and working of the world. This upward growth in consciousness is in the natural line of man's advancement and is the essential preparation for the entry of the Truth-consciousness into manifest form and activity in the world.

NATHANIEL PEARSON

¹ One is reminded of the recent achievement of supersonic speeds in the air, of which the piercing of the sound barrier is an apt example on the material level of man's constant aspiration to make a wider knowledge the potent and practical instrument of his advancement into the Unknown.

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V

THE DIVINE MANIFESTATION AND DIVINE LIFE

BEFORE we proceed to note the identity existing between Sri Aurobindo's views on the Divine Manifestation and the Divine Life and those of the Mother before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo, we had better be clear about what Sri Aurobindo understands by manifestation and the divine life.

There are two important elements which give a distinctive character to the above terms and mark them out as the most creative concepts in spiritual philosophy. The first is the evolutionary and the second the collective element. Manifestation is, according to Sri Aurobindo, the very purpose and goal of evolution. All creation is, in a sense, the manifestation of that which lay latent and unmanifest in the Absolute. It is an expression, a self-expression, of the creative delight of existence; a self-revelation in name and form of the nameless and formless Infinite. But what Sri Aurobindo means by manifestation is not a flawed and imperfect self-revelation under the conditions of mental ignorance and material limitations, as we have today in the mental man, but a perfect self-expression of the Divine Sachchidananda in the triple term of mind, life and body, as the crown of Nature's evolutionary endeavour. He says that emerging from inconscience, the soul of man is mounting, through whatever stumbles and zigzags, towards its own infinite consciousness and bliss in the Divine; and the more it climbs the more it can reveal here, if it will, the light and power and harmony of the higher reaches of its being. The culmination of this evolutionary ascent will be the supreme creative Truth-Consciousness, the transcendent Supermind or Vijnan, in which man will live, even as the Divine lives, in the unfading glory of infinite knowledge and power and creative delight of an immortal existence.

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The ascent to the Supermind will be followed by a descent of the supramental Consciousness-Force into the nature of man and the latter's transformation into the divine nature or Para Prakriti. When the transformation is complete,—it is only the supramental Force that can radically transform human nature—the whole being of man will be ready for a perfect manifestation of the Divine in life, which is the ultimate end of evolution. This evolutionary aspect of manifestation has to be taken fully into account in any correct appreciation of Sri Aurobindo's gospel of the Divine Life, for it argues the inevitability of such a consummation.

The second element is, that manifestation, according to Sri Aurobindo, will not be a spiritual victory of an individual or a few exceptional individuals, but a signal triumph of the collective man over the forces of ignorance. For, the crux of the problem of manifestation is the transfiguration of the physical being of man which is half embedded in the subconscious and the inconscient—a thing of obscure appetites and mechanical habits, stubborn in its refusal to admit light and order and any higher conscious force into itself; and no individual, however great he may be, is capable of completely transforming his physical being without there being a considerable change and modification in the general physical being of humanity itself. Matter, like Mind and Life, is an indivisible substance, and if the manifestation of the spirit in it is the final destiny of terrestrial evolution, it has to undergo the supramental transfiguration, just as any other part of the human being; and whatever transformation takes place in it will be the heritage of humanity at large, and not the enclosed monopoly of only a few gifted individuals. It is true, of course, that a few individuals will be the pioneers in this spiritual work of transformation and manifestation, but what they will achieve will be the pledge and prophecy of what humanity in general is called upon to accomplish. This collective aspect of the message of manifestation foreshadows the splendour of a more or less universal perfection in humanity.

This manifestation of Spirit in Matter, of God in man, will be an unhampered expression of man's integral living in the Divine. His body, life, soul and mind, in possession of the Divine and possessed by Him, will reveal nothing but Him in thought and feeling and action, and fulfil Him and His Will in the world. This is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Divine Life. Defining the process and the condition of the Divine Life Sri Aurobindo says, "The Divine descends from pure existence through the play of consciousness-Force and Bliss and the creative medium of Supermind

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into cosmic being; we ascend from Matter through a developing life, soul and mind and the illuminating medium of Supermind towards the divine Being. The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere, is where mind and Supermind meet with a veil between them. The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity; for by that rending, by the illumining descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the all-comprehending Supermind, the soul realise its divine self in the all-possessing all-blissful Ananda, life possess its divine power in the play of omnipotent Conscious-Force and Matter open to its divine liberty as a form of the divine Existence. And if there be any goal to the evolution which finds here its present crown and head in the human being, other than an aimless circling and an individual escape from the circling, if the infinite potentiality of this creature, who alone here stands between Spirit and Matter with the power to mediate between them, has any meaning other than an ultimate awakening from the delusion of life by despair and disgust of the cosmic effort and its complete rejection, then even such a luminous and puissant transfiguration and emergence of the Divine in the creature must be that high-uplifted goal and that supreme significance."

That the ideal of such a manifestation with its implicits of divine perfection and fulfilment in general humanity as an inevitable evolutionary consummation, is a new one cannot be gainsaid. There is no evidence of its existence either in the traditions of Indian spirituality or in Western religious and philosophic Idealism. The Christian ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth is at best an ethical ideal of righteousness and piety, carrying no implications of a collective ascent of mankind to a higher than the present mental level of consciousness and a corresponding descent of any higher Truth-Consciousness into humanity. The idea of Satya Yuga, as it prevails in India, is also a rather vague anticipation of a cyclic reign of Truth and Justice ending the sway of ignorance and falsehood. The idealistic thought of mankind has, indeed, dreamed of a millennium upon earth, but the dream, except being a remote inspiration to the higher endeavours of a very small section of humanity, has never been able to base itself on any definite truth of spiritual experience or any comprehensive vision of the purpose and possibilities of evolution. Sri Aurobindo's ideal of the divine manifestation and divine life on earth claims originality, in as much as it is "a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualised, even

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though it is one natural but still secret outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour." What Sri Aurobindo envisages as the aim of his Integral Yoga,—for he holds up not only the sublime ideal, but gives a definite guidance on the way to its realisation,—is "not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of consciousness (the Supramental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active."

The divine manifestation in the divine life has been the constant preoccupation of the Mother all through her life, the single aim of all her spiritual strivings. As we read her "Prayers and Meditations", we find it to be the recurring refrain of all her heart's songs mounting towards the Divine. Not content with the bliss of an absorbed union with the Supreme in the immobile depths of her being, she has laboured for long years and through unimaginable difficulties to extend the orbit of the union and its creative bliss down to her most outer physical being, so that from her soul to her body and its activities, all may be an uninterrupted expression of the Divine Presence and an integrated means of the fulfilment of His Will. This colossal work of revealing the divine glory and dispensing the divine Grace in a life of ceaseless activity, she has undertaken, as the "Prayers and Meditations" proclaims from page to page, in response to the express Will of the Divine, so that the fruits of her labours may be reproduced in humanity and there may be a perfect manifestation of Spirit in transformed Matter.

In her Prayer of the 11th December, 1912, the Mother says to the Divine, "Thou alone art the doer and I am the instrument; and when the instrument is ready for a completer manifestation, the manifestation will quite naturally take place." Even so far back as 1912, she knew that the manifestation of the Divine on earth was inevitable and that she was the pioneer instrument chosen for that purpose. The knowledge of her supreme role was clear and definite and she expresses it with a selfless candour and joy in her Prayer of the 10th February, 1913: "My being goes up to Thee in thanksgiving, not because Thou usest this weak and imperfect body to manifest Thyself, but because *Thou dost manifest Thyself*, and that is the Splendour of splendours, the Joy of joys, the Marvel of marvels." Again in her Prayer of the 13th March, 1913, she speaks of the ceaseless prayer of her integral being which desires "to unite with Thee (the Divine) so as to manifest Thee." Union has for her at once a static and a dynamic aspect, for, without a dynamic union in the full

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flood of life's activities, there cannot be any manifestation in Matter. The path of discipline which leads to the dynamic union, she has chalked out in her Prayer of the 28th November, 1912, and in many a subsequent Prayer; which proves, if any proof were at all needed, that she knew what she meant by manifestation; and what she meant was exactly what Sri Aurobindo has always held up before humanity as the ideal of his Integral Yoga and the goal of the evolutionary march of Nature. In her Prayer of August 8, 1913, she calls upon the essential divine harmony which is immanent in all things to manifest itself "in the most outward forms of life, in every feeling, in every thought, in every act." Her insistence has always been on the perfection of the most outer, the most physical part of human nature. And we have the same ideal stressed time and again in the writings of Sri Aurobindo: "...Its (of his Yoga) aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter."¹

With regard to the "Advent" of the Divine, that is to say, His unveiled manifestation in collective humanity, the Mother has been as positive as Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo says,

"If I believe in the probability and not only possibility, if I feel practically certain of the Supramental Descent (I do not fix a date), it is because I have my grounds for the belief, not a faith in the air. I know that the Supramental Descent is inevitable—I have faith in view of my experience that the time can be and should be now and not in a later age.... I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane. That is why I am not alarmed by the aspect of the world around me or disconcerted by the often successful fury of the adverse forces who increase in their rage as the Light comes nearer and nearer to the field of earth and Matter." "I know with absolute certitude that the Supramental is a truth and that its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable."²

Let us now listen to what the Mother says in her Prayers to the Divine so

¹ "Lights on Yoga" by Sri Aurobindo.

² "Letters of Sri Aurobindo," Vol II

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far back as 1913-1914. In her Prayer of the 17th August, 1913, she speaks of flying up into "Thy divine atmosphere with the power to return as messengers to the earth and announce the glorious tidings of Thy Advent which is near." Again, on November 29, 1913, she says to the Divine;

"But the hour of Thy manifestation has come.

And canticles of joy will soon break out from every side."

Knowing, as she does, her pioneer part in the manifestation, she prays to God, on February 8, 1914:

"I implore that more and more perfectly identified with Thee, I may become nothing else than Thou manifested in word and act..."

Another Prayer (dated Feb 23, 1914) breathes the self-same aspiration:

"Grant that I may be a useful and clairvoyant collaboratrix and that all in me may promote the plenitude of Thy manifestation."

And what is the best way of promoting the plenitude of the divine manifestation?

"To live in Love, by Love, for Love, indissolubly united to Thy highest manifestation..."¹

"But the supreme science, O Lord, is to be united with Thee, to confide in Thee, to live in Thee, *to be Thou*; and then there is nothing that is impossible to the man manifesting Thy omnipotence."²

"There is only one resource, it is to unite ourselves as perfectly as we can with the highest and purest light we can conceive of, to identify our consciousness as completely as possible with the absolute Consciousness, to strive to receive all inspiration from it alone, in order to facilitate as best we can its manifestation upon the earth, and, confident of its power, consider the events with serenity."³

In the first and third quotations, the Mother speaks of "the highest manifestation" and "the highest and purest light," which evidently means what

¹ Prayers and Meditations—March 1, 1914.

² Do Do —March 17, 1914.

³ Do Do —March 23, 1914.

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Sri Aurobindo calls the supramental manifestation or the supramental light, which is the goal of earthly evolution. She knows that the manifestation she is heralding, initiating and incarnating will be something surpassing all that has taken place up to now. It will be a New Creation, as Sri Aurobindo terms it, or a new race of humanity. The unprecedented perfection of such an eventuality can be glimpsed through one of her old writings of 1912 where, outlining the path of "the manifestation by all of the inner Divinity which is One," and indicating "the most useful work to be done," she says:

"To individualise the states of being *that were never till now conscious in man* and, by that, to put the earth in connection with one or more of the fountains of universal force that are still sealed to it."¹

This unsealing of the sealed fountains of Force and putting the earth in connection with them—is it not the central secret of Sri Aurobindo's work of the supramental manifestation?

In fact, the more we reflect upon the ideal the Mother had been endeavouring to realise in her life before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo, the more we are struck by the identity of their life's mission and the unwavering certitude of victory with which they have engaged in a grim combat with the forces of terrestrial ignorance. This certitude of victory the Mother had from her early years, not as an outcome of faith, but of a series of profound experiences, and her knowledge about herself and her life's work was luminously confirmed much later by Sri Aurobindo when he wrote,

"Her (the Mother's) embodiment is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the Supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible."²

"The Mother comes in order to bring down the Supramental and it is the descent which makes full manifestation here possible."³

Born to collaborate with Sri Aurobindo in the work of the supramental manifestation and the establishment of the Divine Life on earth, the Mother had the most decisive physical confirmation of her inner certitude when

¹ "Words of the Mother"

² "Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother."

³ "Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother."

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she first met Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry on the 29th March, 1914. The whole teeming mass of her past experiences melted and lit up into one thrilled revelation. The earth shuddered with joy and the heavens showered their benediction when the Mother's soul went up in prayer to the Supreme:

"It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth: His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth."¹

And thus commenced the marvel of a fateful collaboration for the achievement of the divine Manifestation and the Divine Life upon earth.

RISHABHCHAND

Prayers and Meditations—March 30, 1914

SRI AUROBINDO'S SIGNIFICANCE TO MAN¹

WE have chosen for this evening's subject "Sri Aurobindo's significance to man" because there are some men who are not mere ordinary individuals; they embody in themselves some idea, ideal or a principle to such an extent that they might fitly be called its representatives. Some men become to us even in their individual life like milestones that measure the advance of man as a race. Sri Aurobindo is such a milestone in more senses than one. Sri Aurobindo is not a mere human personality and all his life appears to be significant to man in more senses than one; He embodies in a supreme degree the intense aspiration of man for the Divine and the possibility of manifesting the Divine in life. On the one hand, he is a milestone in the evolutionary movement of man and he is again an indication of the Divine possibilities to which man can rise. If we look at his early life we get this conviction that his life had a significance for man even from his very childhood. In England, where his father took him for education at the early age of 7, with special care to make a complete Englishman out of him, he typified in himself in an eminent degree "the will to know"; for, an intense zeal for knowledge completely occupied him during the fourteen years of his stay in England. It is a marvel how with his brilliant intellect, his success in the school and the college, and his eminent career during his studies in the I.C.S., he remained immune to all the ordinary ambitions, how he did not fall a prey to the attractions of a brilliant career. Yes, there is something impersonal about him even in his search for knowledge and when we look at this period of his early life in England, we are reminded of the truth of our ancient belief that some spirits come here with a mission of their own, they come not so much to take and to receive as to give. Ordinarily, some of the great European thinkers have told us that the spring of man's action lies in the "will-to-be" and "will-to-power". This will-to-be was expressed in its process by the enunciation of three laws of evolution by Sir Charles

¹ Address delivered at the Green's Hotel, Bombay on 11th July 1952

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Darwin. "Struggle for existence", "survival of the fittest", "adaptation to environment." On deeper observation, we find that this is rather an incomplete account which does not explain all the activities of man and certainly not his profoundest and highest actions. We should rather add to it "the will to know", "the will to grow", "the will to perfection". In Sri Aurobindo's youth we find this 'will to know' is an impersonal will free from the world of ambition enabling him to drink deep at the fountain of Greek culture, European history, English literature and poetry, imbibing all that is important in the social and political history of Europe. The second great significance that followed the first significance, the "will-to-know" was "will-to-freedom".

As soon as he came to India, this "will-to-freedom" first asserted itself as the will of Indian Nation to political freedom with which he completely identified himself. Indian political life at that time was dominated by a school of moderatism which relied on petition and prayer to the foreign rulers and looked upon a few seats in the Legislature and a few political reforms as a goal of their activities. Almost on his return to India he criticised the ideology of moderate school and emphasised India's inalienable birthright to "freedom and self-reliance, sacrifice and organisation" as the means for achieving the goal. So unselfish and impersonal is his life from the beginning that hardly out of his teens with all the attractions of a brilliant career in the Baroda State lying before him he threw himself wholeheartedly into the dangerous waters of Indian political life. It was a time when it was risky to shout "Vande Mataram" in the streets of the City, it was a time when politics was the occupation of leisure for the intelligentsia. He set for the future politicians the example of sacrifice by resigning his post as Vice-Principal of the Baroda College and joining the National College at Calcutta as its Principal. During those stormy years which decided the trend of Indian political mind permanently, he contributed largely to the formation of the Nationalist Ideology by his contributions to the daily and weekly "Vande Mataram" paper which he conducted from Calcutta. His vast studies of European history, his keen and comprehensive mind and his unrivalled mastery of English language are matters of Indian political history. During those stormy days, the British Government implicated him in the Alipore Bomb case from which he was acquitted for want of evidence. But during the one year of trial that he had to pass in Jail, he revived his studies and practices of Indian Yoga which he had begun at Baroda but which were interrupted by the political activities in which he

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had plunged. It was during his confinement in Jail that he had spiritual realisations which changed the course of his future life. We see here that as soon as his contribution to the political life was complete immediately the Divine claimed him as his own.

Apart from the two great significances of Sri Aurobindo's life as typified in his "will-to-know" and the "will-to-freedom" which began with the will to freedom of India and culminated in the "will to freedom from the thralldom of ignorance", we find here the third great significance of Sri Aurobindo to us. It is that the aim of man is not merely to realise the Divine but to bring down the Divine in his life and change his entire life in the light of the presence and power of the Divine. The founders of all religions have claimed, and rightly, that there is a supra-physical, supra-intellectual origin, a Divine, as the goal of man to reach. They claimed that they had established a connection with the Divine, that they would show the path to man to realise the supreme. With the view to make the realisation of the Supreme possible to man they established Communities of men who accepted their guidance and their path. Their achievements in course of time got mixed up with many impurities of human nature and generally resulted in giving man a religious temperament or a theistical mood. Sri Aurobindo differs from these efforts in the sense that for him the realisation of the Divine is not enough, it is for him only the first and indispensable step but he is not satisfied with merely pointing the way to the Divine, neither is he satisfied with the realisation, the mere contact, or the mere ascent to the Divine. He does not want the Divine to be some miraculous, some out of the way experience to be attained and forgotten or to be attained and lost. The first result of his experience of the Divine consciousness, that came to him in Jail, was that the possibility and the intense will to realise it came to him almost immediately—the possibility of making the realisation of Divine a permanent fact of human consciousness, a dynamic element not acting from above but capable of descending into his nature, if man aspired to it and called it down,—came to him with an intensity that was irresistible. He saw the possibility of establishing the Divine on earth and put that effort as the active goal before him. He made a life-long effort in that direction bringing to that great task a dead earnestness and an intense concentration. This significance of his life to us becomes clear when we study his life during that period. It was after his realisation of the Divine to which he gave expression in his famous "Uttar Para" speech that instead of remaining satisfied with it, he turned, or rather was made to turn, seriously to the

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task of finding out the purpose of the Divine in life. He found that the spiritual realisation of the Divine by man must be canalised, must bear its fruit; life on earth must undergo a change by the advent of God in life. Till now man has been keeping God as far away from life as possible, with the result that the life is deprived of the elevating influence, remains impoverished and is subject to false values, which stresses the outward to the neglect of the inner and spiritual.

In his efforts while at Pondicherry to find out the purpose of the Divine in the Universe he saw that this vast Universal movement is an expression of transcendent Reality, which wears before us the aspect of the Inconscient. When we look at this Universe with our senses and mind, we find that it begins with the Inconscient which gradually moves towards higher and higher degrees of consciousness, knowledge and power and that it has culminated in the mental consciousness of man. He sees that this evolutionary process has not stopped and that there are ranges of Consciousness and Being beyond Mind which have to be realised here on earth, of which all religious efforts, philosophical thinking and mystical life of man are the indications and beginnings. As I just now said, he also envisages that the Divine has to be made a dynamic element in man's life so that it may act as a permanent factor, a transforming power on the life and nature of man. The result of this effort, if we reflect deeply we will see, would show that Sri Aurobindo is right in including life and nature as claimants for freedom. The liberation of man, according to him, is not only the liberation of his Spirit, his Being, but it is also a liberation of his Becoming, liberation of his Nature. At present, the nature of man is imperfect and is in bondage. Sri Aurobindo says that not only the spirit but the nature of man has equal right to freedom and perfection. This freedom of nature and its possibility of perfection, this double nature of liberation—that of spirit and nature—has been indicated in the Gita when it enunciates the existence of the supreme Divine Nature as "Parashakti or prakṛiti of the Divine". This great and earnest effort of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to make the Divine a permanent element acting on life here gradually transforming human nature, is the most important significance of his life to man. For it is bound to change the conditions around us. Not merely to realise and to attain but to bring down and manifest the Divine is his great message. He is thus a landmark in the process of evolution of the Cosmos, marking on the one hand the stage of development of consciousness from mind to the Supermind. He is like an eternal star in the firmament

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acting for the great transition from the mental to the Higher consciousness.

The third significance of his life to us today is his stress on the dynamic aspect of the ultimate Reality. We have schools of philosophy and thought that stress the static and the impersonal and the inactive aspect of the Reality almost to the exclusion of the dynamic aspect. This dynamic aspect again is connected with the Cosmic Evolutionary movement according to Sri Aurobindo: The general conception that the Divine is an absentee landlord who has left the management of his estate for ever in the hands of the powers of Ignorance is one of the current superstitions of our present day mentality. To our ordinary view, life appears as a field for the satisfaction of our impulses, instincts, desires and ambitions. It is the field in which we have first to live but as soon as we can manage to live, the next thing is to acquire, to possess, to satisfy our desires and our ambitions; but if you look at the world and life in the deeper aspects, as Sri Aurobindo shows us, then we will see that the significance of life lies in the growth of our consciousness. Even when we do not see this truth and occupy ourselves with egoism and desires it is really this inner growth which we attain through our ignorant strivings that really counts. Man, subject to his ignorant state, is yet acted upon and helped by the Supreme to reach the goal of his life. And if man could consciously call upon the Supreme to help him in this process of growth his cries would not go unheard. Sri Aurobindo tells us that the Divine is not far, that He is not indifferent to our cries, that He is intimately connected with us, that He is the deepest Self of our selves and that therefore, no sincere cry or appeal can ever go unheard.

A question will arise in our minds that if the Divine is active and if his connection with life is organic and intimate, has He not provided for the ignorant human being any means within his reach which would lead him out of his ignorance to the Light and Truth? Generally we believe, even when we are not atheists, that there is no such provision but it is in reality a kind of atheism to believe that the Divine has left the field of life only to the forces of Ignorance and Darkness. If we just try to get out of the power of appearance to impose itself upon us as the Reality we will see that even in the midst of dense ignorance, suffering and evil, there are stretched out innumerable, invisible golden wires of Divine grace all over the world. There seems to be an active veil of Divine grace covering the whole of life. To each man, even to the lowest is given his own conception of truth, his idea of right, his own idea of what is good, of what is pure, what is noble, what is

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beautiful. It is the little end of the golden thread, visible before his eyes waiting to be actively caught and pursued among the many hundred other forces of darkness and half light. If the human being catches hold of this golden end of the thread, he will find that it will lead him higher and higher, deeper and deeper till he comes to the presence of the Divine, who is the home of all truth, good and beauty, who is the source of all purities and all nobility. There have been philosophies that have stressed the Absolute to the exclusion of the world—they have made it unrelated to the Cosmos and to man. We hear so much about the Absolute far, far away. But what is this Absolute? Is it void of all content? Is it a zero, is it a vacuum, parent of all this vast creation stretching in Eternal time? Rather is it not that this Absolute is itself full of Content, an Infinite of infinite potentialities? It brings out in Eternal flow of Time that which it contains in its Timeless Eternity as innumerable potentialities? What is that Absolute which cannot have any consciousness—cannot harbour power and knowledge? It would,—if it is unable to contain being, consciousness and delight, be relative and not Absolute.

That from which creation flows is not a contentless and remote Absolute but as some of the schools of thought in India have said: it is a Mother,—a Mother-consciousness,—who creates out of Herself this vast cosmos and is looking upon it all with her deep maternal love and solicitude, she holds this creation to her bosom—it is Her life-throb and her sustaining power that keep it going. And this you will see even in the ordinary word that is used for the Cosmos. This cosmos is called "Brahmanda"—"the egg of the Infinite". It contains, therefore, all the potentialities of the Infinite. It is not a falsehood or an unreality—this universe. It is charged with the infinite potentialities of the Infinite. It contains all in its timeless embryonic seed state, all that slowly unrolls in the movement of eternal flow of Time.

This idea is supported by some of the descriptions of the process of creation in the Upanishads. The question is: how does the One succeed in becoming Many: how does the Infinite manage to become all these objects, movements and beings? It is said: "*Sa tapastapva, idam sarvam asrjata.*" "He energised, he brooded—and having brooded he created all this universe" What is this Tapas? It is the heat, it is energising, it is gathering of force, the heat of incubation. Consciousness concentrated on effectivity is Tapas—Consciousness turned towards effectivity is Tapas. It is the Infinite as the Mother-Spirit who broods over this great Cosmic egg and releases into effective manifestation all the innumerable divine potentialities of its own.

Thus it is that more than man it is also the Divine, the Supreme Mother

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who is acting on man to help him to evolve to the higher stage of evolution. Man being a conscious being his own will, his own aspiration, his environment count for some thing in the direction of Man's ascent to the Reality. But it is also the Grace and the action of the Divine that is a potent invisible factor. Sri Aurobindo represented the dynamic Divine in his own life.

The next significance of Sri Aurobindo to us is that he represents to us realised perfection. As the realisation of the Dynamic Divine is an indispensable part of his Integral Truth so is equally his conception of a Divine Perfection. As it is not possible to conceive of the Divine devoid of his Dynamic Power, so also it is not possible to conceive of the Divine without his Divine Perfection. And here a great question arises in our mind: is it at all possible to attain such Divine perfection? We have been told that man is born imperfect and is bound to remain imperfect though he may be constantly dreaming of and making ineffectual striving for attaining perfection. There are systems of philosophy and religion that have taught that this imperfection, ignorance and suffering are constitutional to this cosmos and any attempt at overcoming this constitutional imperfection is foredoomed to failure. Some have therefore preached that this world of imperfection is an unreality and an illusion to be got rid of by a passage into the Infinite Reality which is beyond. Some religions have preached that there is a Perfection possible, but that is not here, on this earth, but somewhere beyond, in a heaven of the Divine. This world is, according to them, a world of ignorance, suffering and pain and is offered to the human being as a test. If man lives his life without submitting to its temptations, retains his faith, piety, devotion and purity, then he is rewarded after death by elevation to a heaven of perfection.

Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, consistent with his realisation of the Dynamic Divine, believes that the perfection,—not merely mental or moral, i.e. not merely human but,—a Divine Perfection is not only possible but the rational and in a sense inevitable end of this evolutionary process.

He finds this in the teachings of the Upanishads, he finds in the Isha, in the Kena, in the Taittiriya. The germ of it you yourself will find in the Gita, if you read it impartially. There the Kurukshetra, the battlefield of the two armies, is not merely the result of clashing human interests, ambitions and passions. It is a field, the outer aspect of which is human, but the deeper and the more profound aspect shows it to be a concern of the Vishvarupa, the Divine in his aspect of Universality. In the 11th chapter of the Gita, Sri Krishna, the Supreme Transcendental Divine, shows to Arjuna that

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all the circumstances of Kurukshetra have been manoevered by him as the Vishvarupa and even the result has been decided in his all knowing Wisdom.

Along with the Reality of the Kurukshetra as a Dynamic field for the action of the Divine we find that the Gita speaks of the possibility of attaining Sadharmya—the condition of having the same nature as the Divine. This attaining to the Divine nature has been not only spoken of by the Gita but the practical line of advance towards it has been implied and indicated in the affirmation of the Vibhuti in the Gita. The ordinary imperfect human nature is overpassed in the case of great men; but in the case of the Vibhuti, says the Gita, there is an embodiment of some aspect of the Divine, some quality, some power, not evolved from below, but as it were, descended from Above. Thus, the Divine seems to prepare the bridge between the present human imperfection and the Divine Perfection.

Sri Aurobindo has worked out this implication on a wider and all comprehensive basis. He has pointed out that the goal of cosmic evolution could only be the manifestation of a greater than mental consciousness of man which would enable him to manifest Divine Perfection; for, with his present instruments of nature, however he may try, man will never be able to attain individual or collective perfection. This attainment of a higher than mental consciousness is in evidence in man from the very beginning of history. In spite of periods of agnosticism and atheism man has retained his irrepressible aspiration for a higher state of perfection which has been termed variously as God, the Absolute, the Perfect and so on. The greatness of Sri Aurobindo lies not merely in pointing out to man the rationality and the inevitability of this Supramental goal of his evolution but it lies more in his lifelong effort to bring down that perfection and embody it in himself so as to make it possible for others to attain it. During this long period of Sadhana, extending over forty long years, he succeeded in bringing down the Overmental consciousness, he transformed his mental, vital and physical consciousness and transformed his nature into a mould in which the Supramental Divine Consciousness, a self-existent Truth-consciousness could work unhampered by the admixture of mind's ignorance and egoism, vital preferences and ambition and the obstruction of the inertia of the physical. Thus he is to us not merely one who has pointed out the goal of Divine perfection, but he stands before us as the embodiment of that very perfection under the limits of the present state of evolution. Thus he has made us understand not only the dynamic aspect of the Divine but also the aspect of Divine Perfection. We have seen, perhaps, in our lives many great personalities

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who have represented to us some aspect of this Divine Perfection. We may have seen God-intoxicated devotees, men of knowledge who live identified with the consciousness of the Infinite, but with none else do we associate the conception of an Integral spiritual perfection as we do with Sri Aurobindo. None represents to us in the same degree the realised embodiment of spiritual perfection as Sri Aurobindo. ...

Here is knowledge acting as self-existent Light, knowledge of Cosmic wideness and unsurpassed clarity. Here we feel an organised vastness, a living Infinity, which yet deigns to satisfy the demands of our mere human reason. Here is Power, Harmony, Peace, Equality, Purity and Grandeur. Here is someone living in the oneness of the soul, in the spiritual unity which does not abrogate the rich variation of its own Self. Here is one who cut out a wide path for humanity to climb from its Ignorance to the peaks of Divine Knowledge. Here is an alchemist who has brought for mankind the Divine Elixir of life transforming the dross of human nature into a divine substance. Thus he represents the type of transformed humanity of the future. He is the founder and the precursor of the Divine race of men. Accepting this significance of Sri Aurobindo, we are able to enlarge our vision and make it cosmic. Accepting him as the realised perfection we learn to look upon life not merely as a field for satisfying our ego and desires but a field for the Divine, a field for the growth of the Divine that is in us. He tells us 'look at your life not in terms of your ego but as an opportunity for the growth of consciousness towards a Divine Perfection. Look at it as Nature looks at it, as the Divine looks at it, try to feel and know the purpose and direction of nature's movement. That which is coming is more important than that which is'. That purpose he himself has beautifully expressed in his great epic Savitri where he traces the beginning of creation and envisages its purpose. How was the world created out of the Absolute? He replies:

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone—
Has called out of the Silence his mute force
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has entered with his silence into space:
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;
He lives in all—who lived in his Vast alone....

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The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,
One who is in us as our secret self,
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
He has made this tenement of flesh his own:
His image in the human measure cast
That to his divine measure we might rise....
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he;
His human portions, we must grow divine."

What counts to us today and what counts to the man in the street today, is the new values, the higher spiritual values which Sri Aurobindo has brought for mankind. The ultimate values of life are not material, not economic, not intellectual not even ethical but spiritual. The stressing of this spiritual values and bringing into prominence this applicability, making available to men a dynamic divine consciousness as a moulding influence for the individual and collective life is to my mind his highest service to man. Even though during his long life the ordinary man did not find any ordinary indication of his love for mankind, I believe, it was the greater, the purer, the more divine, for that very reason. To strive for a distant ideal of the Truth which is going to save mankind, to clarify the goal, to lay down the lines of advance towards it requires a sympathy and love for mankind which can only proceed from a spiritual identity. Then only can it work for man irrespective of man's appreciation or applause for such divine work is its own reward.

The more he advanced the more he became one with the Divine Grace, an embodiment of Grace. This great significance of Sri Aurobindo for us is this embodiment of Grace. After this, all human ignorance was his field of action, for like the Divine he went on excusing all human frailties, with his gaze fixed upon the great ideal, he went on waiting patiently for the slow transformation of human nature to come. It would be in fitness of things if we could pray to him this evening as the embodiment of the Divine Grace. "O Light, O Grace, make us deserving of Thyself, O Thou Divinising stream of Divine Grace pour forth thy saving and transforming waters upon us; and let Thy unceasing flood of Grace flow fertilising the desert of human life."

A. B. PURANI

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(1)

The Waters of Silence. By *Thomas Merton*. Publishers: Hollis and Career, London.

The Waters of Silence have been flowing, in the East as well as in the West, quenching the thirst of those who preferred to die in search of them rather than drink the 'water of bitterness and contradiction' that flows in the world. These fountains of undefiled water flow unseen by men and only some spiritual dowser detects their presence and sates his thirst and the mortal becomes immortal rapt in the ecstasy of Divine Love. "There is intoxication in the waters of contemplation" as the author says and "These are the waters which the world does not know, because it prefers the water of bitterness and contradiction. These are the waters of peace, of which Christ said: 'He that shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall not thirst for ever. But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting.'"

The book, surveys the course of the Cistercian order of monks, from its early beginnings to our present times, its most chequered career full of harrowing tales of hardships and sufferings, its epochs of true spiritual ascension and then long periods when the fire of aspiration sank low and allowed itself to be obscured by the smoke of external rules and regulations losing sight of the goal for which these are at best only means.

In fact, every spiritual movement follows a rhythmic course; in the beginning there is a genuine adherence to the inner spirit of the Master's teaching, a sincere response to the 'voice of infinity' 'the call of the One', on the part of those who catch fire. They are not rigid in their outlook because they have imbibed the true core of the gospel and so they follow it with a flexible fidelity, modifying the discipline to suit various constitutions and temperaments so that all those who have a call can grow freely with

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the joy of the spontaneous outflowing of the soul. But afterwards, the true inspiration begins to ebb away and more and more stress is laid on externalities, such as organization, a strict observance of rules by all without exception, and the result is a faultless organization, everything methodized in the smallest detail, even such things as meditation are fixed with clock-wise regularity, starting with the ringing of the bell and ending just at the fixed time—no matter how you are inwardly disposed—and, we find a magnificent cathedral, lavishly decorated but with the deity missing. This phase while it systematises the life in a faultily faultless order, chalks out streamlined regulations and programmes, turns the whole thing into a rigid and elaborate steel-frame, rendering mechanical what was the spontaneous expression of an aspiration for a higher life. But though the true flame dwindles weak for a long while, it never lets itself be completely swallowed up by the encompassing darkness and again souls come ablaze with the vivifying love and light of the spirit and once more the smouldering fires leap forth and radiate down the centuries and then the period of decline gives out its true secret and reveals itself as a period of silent and laborious preparation, when a frame-work was being built to house a wider spiritual movement.

This is also the story of the Cistercians as narrated by Merton in the book under review. The most refreshing feature of the book is the clarity and the keenness of the author's vision which always disentangles the true from the false, the genuine from the pseudo, always putting the right value on things. He knows, for instance, that austerities and disciplines have value only in so far as they bring us near our goal and that to make them ends in themselves is nothing short of putting the cart before the horse. He always deprecates such tendencies and lays emphasis on the true renunciation which comes as a result of the growth of the soul to a higher altitude and its beckoning to the lower animal nature of man also to breathe in an atmosphere of pure and rarefied air. He says about St. Benedict, "Instead of letting men harden themselves by striving to become heroes of physical endurance, St. Benedict shifted the whole impact of asceticism to the interior—from the flesh to the will. His monks had plenty to eat and plenty of time to sleep....Extraordinary mortifications were forbidden or discouraged."

The whole sense of the spiritual striving is to outgrow the pettiness of the egoistic life full of vanity, arrogance, selfishness as it is, and to live in the Spirit which is eternal and infinite and the same in all. The spiritual vision sees the Divine in all beings and therefore the spiritual man has an equal love for all. As Sri Aurobindo says, "...man has to see and adore the One in all

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things animate and inanimate, to worship the manifestation in sun and star and flower, in man and every living creature, in the forms and forces, qualities and powers of Nature, *vasudevah sarvam iti.*" Hence a copernican revolution is called for in the consciousness of man, he has to become from ego-centric to God-centric in his inview and outview. But it has been invariably noticed that these external austerities engender a sense of personal superiority and magnify the ego thus erecting insurmountable barriers in the path of the seeker. I am reminded of a deep observation that Socrates made about one of his disciples who tried to excel others in ascetic bareness. Antisthenes had no property and dressed in so ragged a cloak that Socrates twitted him: "I can see your vanity Antisthenes through the holes of your cloak."

Moreover, the root of the malady is the presence of 'desire' in man's vital nature and unless this darkness yields place to the light of knowledge one cannot be truly liberated. That is why the Mother has said, "It is an inner attitude of freedom from attachment and from greed of food and desire of the palate that is needed, not undue diminution of the quantity taken or any self-starvation. One must take sufficient food for the maintenance of the body and its strength and health but without attachment or desire." (Words of the Mother 2nd Series)

Merton cites interesting instances when the monks cut themselves adrift from the spirit of the rule of St. Benedict and clung to its letter with the result that the way was open for interpretations that pampered the demands of the lower desires. "St. Benedict had prohibited the flesh of four-footed animals. These casuists pointed out that chickens and ducks and quails and partridges and turkeys and pheasants had only two feet and therefore were not forbidden."

But, as a rule, the Cistercians were men of limpid sincerity and in order to sweep aside all these ritual practices and soulless observance of rules they tended towards extremes of puritanic zeal and led a life of austere bareness and hardship which bordered near upon hurting the flesh. "There would be plenty of cold and hunger and insecurity. Night after night the monk would go to his simple bed of straw, under the stone-vaulting of his dormitory, to rest his aching muscles for a few hours. He would rise in the middle of the night and pray and work for a good long time before he got anything to put into his empty stomach." Such a hard life, lived day after day, in our view is bound to create a state of tension in the sadhaka and except in very rare cases a reaction towards relaxation becomes inevitable. Moreover, a God-love strictly methodised and made compulsory is bound to rob the whole

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effort of the joy of spontaneous rising of the flame of aspiration.

One pauses a little horrified to know that the Cistercians in their hey-day could not understand that the Divine manifests itself in Beauty also. Though they built their monasteries in lonely and wooded places 'they did not seek out such places for the sake of scenery.' Some historians are of the opinion, though Merton does not agree with them, that sometimes they went to the length of preferring marshy and unhealthy places even though 'they never favoured a spirituality that sought perfection in suicide.' Although St. Bernard laid great stress on love for all creatures as he says, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity" still in actual practice they shunned the ordinary mortals so much that once they selected a place which "was inhabited only by wild beasts, and the monks congratulated themselves on having found a place that was all the more perfect for their life because it was repugnant and inaccessible to seculars." Though it is true that in the early stages of sadhana a great vigilance about one's company is imperative because complete transformation of nature demands a complete rejection of the past and its associations which again and again block the path of progress, yet a nervous shrinking also is not compatible with the law of spiritual growth. Those who seek the Divine must by their own life as an example kindle the same aspiration in others so that more and more souls are enabled to open themselves to the breath of a higher life.

But these are minor matters of detail and the real thing is the single-pointed aspiration that brought them together in a collective life in the twelfth century and even today their inspiring example shines as a beacon of light 'amid the encircling gloom' of the present materialist phase of civilization.

There was also an attempt to bring about a true reconciliation between contemplation and external activity and though it eventually failed still it opened the way for new possibilities in the future. The motto was: "first realisation and then action." In our view if they are made complementary then each promotes the other and thus they go on hand in hand. The Mother says in one of Her meditations: "For meditation, contemplation, Union is the result obtained—the flower that blooms; the daily activity is the anvil on which all the elements must pass and re-pass in order to be purified, refined, made supple and ripe for illumination which contemplation gives to them. All these elements must be thus passed one after the other through the crucible before activity becomes needless for the integral development." But then again action does not become redundant and superfluous but turns "into the means to manifest Thee so as to awaken the other centres

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of consciousness to the same dual work of the forge and illumination."

Merton's words are also illuminating and pregnant with a deep truth on this subject. He writes: "Firmly established in peace and harmony within himself, when all the powers of his soul are united by grace and virtue, the contemplative receives into his soul, into his intellect and will, the choice graces of God's light and love."

"Under the impulsion of these forces within him, he can go out of his cloister into the exterior world and do his share of the world's activities, performing good works for Christ and the Church and enriching himself still more with the fruits of his activity."

Again about the supreme ecstasy that comes of the Divine union and in which the mind and the intellect are stilled he writes: "Not that love and intellection have here ceased, but they have been drawn up to a level so transcendently simple that the soul acts without knowing that it acts, and loves and knows all at once in a movement so pure and so free of all expense of human energy that it seems not to be acting or knowing or loving at all."

At times Merton's words become revelatory and unmistakably show the depth of his own realizations.

"God loves us that we may learn to love Him for love's sake, because He knows that pure love is the most perfect beatitude, and that is what He wants to share with us."

And here he knocks the bottom out of austerities and penances:

"It was the Holy Ghost who taught these saints the one magnificent truth that so many austere penitents had seemed to forget: that if we love God, it is because God has loved us more, and that God has created us not so much to fear Him and honour him and worship him, as to love him, since love is the perfection of all adoration and homage."

These are universal truths and in each clime and country men of higher realization have expressed them in almost identical language. E.W.F. Tomlin writes in his book, "The Great Philosophers—The Eastern World": "In our survey, we have come upon thinker after thinker...who, often against all reason and unaided by revelation, have preached the 'divine connection', Maat, the Tao, the Way, with a unanimity impossible to confound with coincidence, and foolish to dismiss as illusion or poetry."

The *Waters of Silence* is a great book and will go a long way in helping

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man realise the light of Divine knowledge which alone can bring on earth a true living peace. After a perusal of the book containing luminous accounts of the spiritual aspirants in Europe and America one finds Sri Aurobindo's words in his *Message to America* fully justified:

"East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move. There has been a tendency in some minds to dwell on the spirituality or mysticism of the East and the materialism of the West; but the West has had no less than the East its spiritual seekings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics, the East has had its materialistic tendencies, its material splendours..."

R. N. KHANNA

(2)

Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasayanam. Author: *Madhusudana Saraswati*. Editor and Commentator: *Vedantitilaka Damodaran Nambutirippad*. Publisher: K. Shankaran Namputiri, Cochin Satram, Kedarghat, Banaras. Pp. 15+8+265. Price Rs. 2-4/-

The theory and practice (or the science and art) of Bhakti, devotion to the Divine Lord is the subject matter of this treatise entitled "Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasayanam" which means the Elixir that is Devotion to the Divine. The author is Madhusudan Saraswati of the *Advaita-Siddhi* fame. The work has three sections, called *Ullāsas* of which the first has the author's own gloss, while the second and third are commented upon by the editor. A *tippani* or brief annotation for the commentary on all the Ullāsas is also written by Sri Nambutirippad. This work has been twice published before. For the first time it was brought to light and printed in Calcutta, but it was incomplete, containing only the first section. Later, some forty years ago, it appeared in the Achyuta Granthamala series, Banaras, edited with the author's own commentary for the first Ullāsa and with the Editor's commentary for the rest, by the erudite scholar Goswami Damodarlal Sastri. His was indeed a creditable undertaking for having made a suc-

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successful attempt to unearth the missing sections and publishing the whole work as stated above. But it must be borne in mind that in a sense his was a pioneering work, and as in all such cases the errors attending upon first attempts crept into his edition, wrong words found place in the text, and he being an avowed follower of Madhwacharya did not, as the present editor has shown in this edition, enter into the spirit of the author's text. Thus arose the need for this publication. Here the Nambutirippad restores the right words to their right places in the text and wherever he finds it necessary to differ from the previous commentator, he does so in order to bring out the spirit of the text and there is close reasoning for the conclusions he arrives at. We shall state in brief the central idea of the Vedantin Madhusudan in the theme of his choice and that will enable us to appreciate his special contribution to the subject. This will be very much facilitated by forming an impression in our mind of the life of Madhusudan, his heritage, environment, activities, literary and social, if any, in short, of the personality as a whole, not in details and parts, as that is unnecessary for our purpose and beyond our scope.

Ram Misra, a Kashyapa Brahmin hailed from Kanauj and settled in Bengal, first resided in Navadwip and later shifted to East Bengal. His family and the descendants lived for a long time in the village of Kotalipara in the Faridpur District. Purandaracharya was the sixth in lineage and Kamalanayana was the third son of his brother Yadavananda of whom the tenth descendent is Sjt. Chintaharana Chakravarti of Bethune College, Calcutta, who is naturally proud of his lineage and preserves the geneological tree.

Now, Kamalanayana, after completing the usual course of studies, moved to Navadwip for advanced courses and there he studied under Sri Rama Tarkavagisha under whom also studied Gadadhara Bhattacharya of Neo-Nyaya fame, a senior contemporary. His remarkable brilliance in the studies and later in debating skill left its impress not only in the schools, but wherever he made his appearance. But, the supreme object of life had such an irresistible attraction for him that he left Bengal for good with the avowed object of renouncing the world i.e. worldly life and entering the monastic order under proper guidance. He visited Banaras and under Madhava Sarāswati studied Vedānta, and got initiated into Sannyas, formal renunciation, by Vishweshwara Saraswati who gave him on initiation into Sannyas the name of Madhusudan Sarāswati. All these facts are gathered from the author's works. From a perusal of the detailed discussion of scholars about

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the date, we can safely state his period to be 1495-1585 A.D. or 1490-1602 A.D. In any case he had a long life and record of service, apart from being the author of about 20 works of which at least ten are vedantic and could be safely assigned to his authorship. King Pratapaditya, Emperor Akbar and celebrities in literary and devotional spheres known to history were his contemporaries among whom we shall mention one for the interest that attaches itself to this saint-author and the light it throws on his courage in the face of crisis and in a way on the dynamic personality of this great Vedantin. That name is none other than Akbar the Great Mogul.

In an article on 'The organisation of Sannyasins of the Vedanta' (1925 J.R.A.S.) Farquhar records an incident in the life of Madhusudan Saraswati which shows the mettle of the man in a critical situation. We shall briefly mention that episode here, as that spotlights the courage, broad sympathies and practical wisdom of this Sannyasin which aspect is not as much well-known and appreciated as Madhusudan the Vedantin, star of the first magnitude in the firmament of Advaita dialectics. The Fakirs of Islam were molesting the Sannyasins of the Vedanta, inflicting physical injury on the poor unarmed mendicants; while the former were all armed and conscious that they belonged to the same faith as the reigning emperor, the latter, precluded from being armed by their station in life i.e. *sannyās*, renunciation, had nothing but their bare bodies and tonsured heads inviting the villainous assaults of the crude and vulgar elements in the community of Fakirs. When the Sannyasins could no longer bear with the long and sustained attack of the brute forces and approached Madhusudan for advice, the latter made up his mind to put an end to the pitiable plight of the wretched *sādhus* and immediately made a move towards the end. He went to the capital and sought an interview with the emperor. When Akbar gave him audience and Madhusudan explained to him the situation and the object of his visit, the emperor thought for a while and sought the inevitable Birbal's advice.

As usual, the ready-witted wise man said: "The order of Sannyas among Hindus is entered into by Brahmins alone who could not carry any lethal weapon in accordance with their shastraic custom. Why not allow other castes also to enter the order of Sannyas and arm them with weapons lawfully? The Brahmin Sannyasins need not carry weapons, let them observe their custom and shastra, but the rest of the Hindu Sannyasins armed will be sufficient guarantee against temptation to do mischief from the wicked vagabonds among the Fakirs. Dharma Shastra can be properly interpreted,

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if Madhusudan Saraswati is so minded, he can find suitable means to amend, interpret, and regulate the shastraic customs and save the Sannaysins as a whole. In that case the emperor would be pleased to grant all legitimate requests in that direction etc." Akbar readily gave his assent to the proposal as far as he was concerned. Madhusudan appreciated the wise counsel of Birbal and accepted it with the approval of the emperor. The plan worked very well to the great relief of the aggrieved Sannyasins. He made the Hindu community accept his novel proposal that of the ten sub-orders of Sannyasins three must be reserved for Brahmins viz. *Ashrama*, *Tirtha* and *Saraswati*, and the remaining seven, *Bharati*, *Giri*, *Aranya* etc. for others. Ever since, this has been observed in North India, though this system does not hold good in the South.

The liberal views of Madhusudan are quite manifest in some of his activities, much more so in his literary works. This fact is noteworthy in view of his uncompromising position as an Advaitin, the author of *Advaita-Siddhi* in which he has applied his unsurpassed debating skill on the lines of the Neo-Nyaya of Navadvip. India of those centuries considered it a great merit on the part of a scholar who could vanquish his adversary in a debate. Madhusudan in his famous dialectical work mentioned above, especially in the first two sections, employs highly technical terms, raises a number of alternative questions and negatives all the possible answers by confounding the other party or parties. The object is rather to confound than to convince. That was permissible in those days, though it is certainly not admissible in modern times. But it must be noted that while, on the one hand, he was an orthodox Advaitin for dialectical purposes and quite loyal to Shankaracharya, always conformed to rules as ordained in the Dharma Shastras, he was on the other hand a devotee of uncompromising type who upheld the Bhakti-view and strongly advocated the path of devotion, Bhakti Marga, for all seekers and taught by his own example that it was superior to the line of *Jnana*, Knowledge, in many respects and pointed out the difference between the two in the work under review which we shall mention presently. In this connection it may be mentioned that he sought to reconcile the Shruti, the Scripture for Brahma Vidya, with the Pancharatra, the Scripture for Bhakti, the Bhagavata cult. With this object he wrote a small treatise "*Ishwara-pratipatti-prakasha*" throwing light on the correct grasp of the concept of Godhead in the two scriptures. He equates Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishwara and the Transcendental of the Shruti with Samkarshana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Vasudeva of the Tantra

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and concludes that these four are the same as the four parts of the Udgitha, and the *turiya*, the fourth, a secret knowledge of which, he says, is obtained through initiation and by the grace of the Guru.

His was a nature where the qualities of the heart vied with those of the head. In fact he upheld the view of the Bhakti school (p. 100-116) that to hear and utter God's Name are more powerful and effective than the ceremonials ordained in the Smriti (expiatory rites, *prayaschitta*). His innate devotion was nurtured on the soil of his birth; a land known for the free expression of Bhakti at least since Jayadeva's time and famed for the exuberant radiance of Sri Krishna's love since the appearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Doubtless his friendship with Tulsidas of Ramayana fame while at Banaras was natural and temperamentally agreeable, a powerful stimulant for his activities in the field of devotional literature. He clearly saw that the orthodox way of propagating Vedantic knowledge and its practice was rigid and narrow and too restrictive while Bhakti, the devotional way was broad-based, inclusive and liberal and threw his weight on its side in the life he led as well as in his writings on the science and art of Bhakti. There are ten works of which the subject-matter is Vedanta, jñanamarga, some of them are independent works and the rest commentaries. Other works are devoted to Bhakti. Here again some are commentaries on Hymns like the Mahimna Stotra, some are independent works like Bhakti-rasayana. That he has written this work after writing many Vedantic works on the side of Knowledge is evident from his references to them in this work. For in his commentary on Karika 24 of Ullasa I, he says 'all this process is expounded in detail in my *Siddhanta Bindu*' (P. 58). In another place (P. 55), "The details are to be understood from my *Vedanta-kalpalatika*" (Com. on 1.20). He does not subscribe to the generally held opinion among the Vedantins that devotion and worship of Brahman with features, *saguna-upasti*, is a concession to human weakness and is meant for the common folk who are weaklings and not competent for Jnana, for *manda-adhikārins*. He drives home his argument and shows how Bhakti Yoga is superior to Jnana Marga for reasons stated in his gloss on the very first verse (pp. 26-27). We can very well understand Madhusudan when without mincing matters he categorically mentions the points of difference between Jnana and Bhakti. The difference pertains to four aspects of the question, he states: *Swarupa*, nature, (2) *Sadhana*, means, (3) *Phala*, fruit, (4) *Adhikara*, competency of the seeker. As regards the first, he says, Bhakti is the state of the mind-stuff sufficiently *melted* and modified so as to take the form of the Lord who is worshipped

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while still retaining the recognition of difference between the worshipper and the worshipped, Bhagavan and Bhakta. But Brahma Vidya is the state in which there is no recognition of any difference; no melting of the mind-stuff, *chitta-druti*, and there remains nothing but the consciousness of the Self, one-without-a-second.

2) As regards the means also there is a gulf of difference. The means of acquiring and developing Bhakti lies in hearing and constantly meditating upon the sublime qualities of the Lord Bhagavan. Whereas the Sadhana of Brahmaidya lies in meditating upon "That thou art" and other sentences of the Vedanta.

3) The fruit of Bhakti, the culminating result of the practice is superb Love that has for its object the Divine being, while that of Brahma Vidya is *Kaivalya*, the state Absolute.

4) And last as regards *adhikāra*, qualification, any living being, *prāṇi mātra*, can enter the path of Bhakti. Whereas the line of Brahma Vidya is open only to those who have renounced everything, Sannyasins, and are equipped with the well-known fourfold sadhana beginning with discrimination between the Eternal and transitory and ending with keen desire for liberation.

Madhusudan begins the work with a verse in which he proposes to expound Bhakti Yoga in the light of shastraic texts by which term he means not primarily the Vedantic texts which inculcate the Brahma Vidya, but mainly the Bhagavata and texts like the Gita. It can be put in brief this way. The scripture for the line of Knowledge—Brahma Vidya—is the Shruti, the Upanishads; the canon for the Bhakti Yoga is Bhagavata. Therefore his commentary on the first of the three Ullasas of this work contains exhaustive quotations from that priceless scripture of the Vaishnava cult and every statement he makes in the Karika is well reasoned and supported by resort to passages from the Bhagavata and in a few places by apt lines from the Bhagavad Gita. The commentary of this saint-author on the remaining two *Ullāsas* of the work not being available, it is written by the erudite editor Sri Nambutirippad following faithfully in the footsteps of the great scholar-saint with appropriate and copious quotations from the Bhagavata, Gita, and occasionally from other Puranic texts for comparative reference in support. The first section contains 37 Karikas; along with the author's commentary and the editor's annotation it covers half the volume of the work. There are 72 topics discussed here including the process of the development of Bhakti as Rasa, Bhakti as Sadhana, as means, and Bhakti

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as Sadhya, to be realised. If the first Section deals with Bhakti in a general way, the second expounds Bhakti in particular details, while the last establishes the theory of Bhakti as Rasa—as distinct from the traditional nine Rasas which he admits and respects. In his treatment of the subject of Bhakti-Rasa he does not move an inch astray from rules, the recognised forms of the constituent elements of Rasa as propounded by Alankarikas from the earliest times. Independent and bold thinker, yet a tenacious traditionalist; a towering intellect, yet an irrepressible ardour of the heart given without reserve to the Godhead Sri Krishna whose body is the Para Brahman, he knew how to meet the rival parties of his times in the field of religious philosophies and gave the lie direct to the general and loose accusation that the Advaitins—the Mayavadins—are atheists, Buddhists in disguise, by his personal example as much as by his writings.

We may sum up in the words of the scholar who writing the Foreword to the book puts the substance of Madhusudan's life as he lived and the position he occupied as one who never forgot in all his writings on Bhakti that he was an Advaitin:

"If so, is it that *Kaivalya*, the realisation of the Absolute, does not arise from Knowledge alone? No, who says so? It is true that Knowledge being opposed to Ignorance, the former dispels the latter. But the Knowledge must be applied to the acquisition of Bhakti. Incidentally that knowledge is helpful for the purpose of *Kaivalya*. Who is there propounding a theory that God confers *mukti*, liberation, on the devotee without a knowledge of the Atman? The fact is this that the relation of cause and effect exists between Bhakti and Mukti, the former is the effect, while the latter is the cause. Therefore knowledge must be directed towards the acquiring of Bhakti. Bhakti achieves results which can not be done by knowledge or anything else. It is a fact that knowledge is the direct and immediate cause of *Kaivalya* which is a different matter altogether. Therefore it is that liberated souls assume embodiments and worship the Godhead, says Shankaracharya, who in a famous oft-quoted verse sings:

"Even when the difference is blotted out, O Lord, I am thine, not Thou mine. For the wave is of the Sea, not the Sea of the wave."

A word about Madhusudan's beloved God is necessary before we close this review. To him Sri Krishna is not an incarnation of the Godhead, but is the Godhead who incarnates himself in the ten embodiments of the Puranas as is sung by Jayadeva in the opening verses of Gita Govinda, *daśa-kṛti-kṛté*.

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The vast erudition, care and industry of the editor are manifest on every page. The value of this publication is enhanced by the editor being a redoubtable champion of Vedanta doubled with being a devotee of intense ardour.

It deserves to be prescribed as text-book in all colleges and universities and Pathashalas of the old type where Shastras are being taught and prescribed for examinations as such a step would inculcate Bhakti in the minds of the students of Vedanta which generally, not always, not without exception, dries up the heart-springs of the soul leaving the Vedantin dry. It is a great pleasure to learn that already it is prescribed in the "Sanga-Veda-Vidyalaya" at Kashi, conducted by the famous Pundit of unsurpassed learning, Sri Rajeshwar Sastry Dravid of Banaras.

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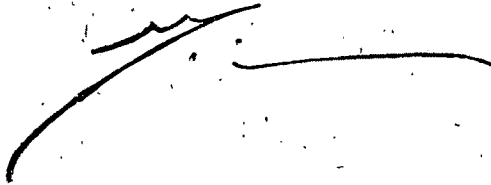
The more you grumble, the more your pains will increase.

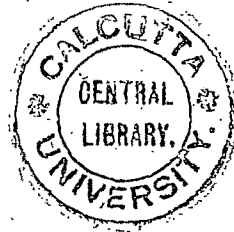
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It is no use thinking that one is very sincere. It is useless to think that one is not sincere. What is useful is to be sincere.

★

They who have faith will go through.





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The eyes of love gaze starlike through death's night,
The feet of love tread naked hardest worlds.
He labours in the depths, exults on the heights;
He shall remake thy universe, O Death!

Savitri, Book IX, Canto 2

SRI AUROBINDO



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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

TO LEARN AND TO UNDERSTAND

IT is one thing to learn (*apprendre*), quite another to understand (*comprendre*). In learning you take in a thing by your surface mind and it is a thing that comes in from outside like a foreign body; it is put into you, almost driven and forced into you. You do not absorb it, make it wholly your own. If you are not mindful, leave it aside for sometime, it goes clean out of your memory. Understanding a thing, on the other hand, means, you absorb it, get it into the stuff of your being, you live it in your consciousness within. When you have understood a thing you never forget it; it has become an element of your consciousness. Years and years might have passed, yet the thing would be as clear and vivid as it was on the first day. Why do you forget so easily the lessons that you learn—with pain and difficulty—from books or at school from teachers? It is because you simply

* Based on Mother's talks.

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learn, but do not understand. You retain in your brain the words, the outer formula or forms, you note down the information; but what they stand for, their import and inner law, the living truth escape you totally. You read Einstein, read over and over again his formulas and equations and even commit them to memory—learn by rote; but after a time, if you lose touch with them, they vanish from your mind or become very vague and misty and you have to start again. That is because you learnt Einstein simply as a lesson, whereas if you entered into the perceptions these forms embody, the inner principles that determine them, if the Einsteinian consciousness became in some way your consciousness, then you would have understood and never forgotten. It would not be a lesson but an experience. What is needed, then, is this inner awakening by which you live a thing, identify yourself with it, become one with it and not simply meet or make a nodding acquaintance only with it. Unless there is this awakening or openness, as we say, in the consciousness, however much a lesson is thrust into you, it will not enter deeply enough. You may learn, like a parrot, but you will not understand, it will pass over your head and soon be forgotten.

Indeed it was not very much necessary for the ancient sages and occultists to try to hide their knowledge in an obscure language, in codes and symbols and ciphers for fear of misuse by the common uninitiate; even if they had expressed their knowledge in ordinary language, ordinary people would not have understood it at all. It would be like my speaking to you in Chinese, you would make nothing of it. One comprehends only what one already possesses, that is to say, you must have within you something at least of what you want to know and understand, something corresponding to it, similar in nature and vibration. That is what I mean when I say that you should be open, your mind and consciousness should be turned and attuned to the object it wishes to seize; it must have some light in it in order to receive the light outside and beyond. If it is mere obscurity, the light does not light; even if it manages to come it departs soon or is engulfed in the darkness.

The human mind can seize things only in three dimensions. A three-dimensional knowledge is its normal possession. But there is a fourth and a fifth dimension (which some intellectuals in Europe have begun to guess at): indeed there are at least as many as twelve dimensions in reference to the present creation. We cannot readily picture a four-dimensional object, a fifth dimension borders on the bizarre and beyond that it is all a blank to the human consciousness. If I spoke of these multi-dimensional experiences, what would you make of them?

THE COMING OF SUPERMAN

For example, you read and hear much and constantly of the Divine. What is He or It to you in reality? Something vague, misty, wordy. The perception is not concrete to you. You can doubt, deny, refuse credence as you like. But if you once experience it, hold it in your inner being and consciousness, in however small way, however little of it, if you get the direct contact in whatever manner—well, the thing is unforgettable, it lives, lives for ever. If the whole world denies and scoffs, you are unshaken, you smile at the world, for you know what you know.

What then is the way to this experience, to this opening in the consciousness? The Presence is there, the Light is there; the Grace always leans down to you, surrounds you. On your side you have to make a corresponding gesture. You have to ask for the thing sincerely, whole-heartedly, aspire for it tirelessly. You have to ask for it persistently, without losing faith or trust; you have to go on perseveringly without counting the time taken.

There is an iron door there nailed and fixed. It has to be broken open. It is the door that shuts you within your narrow ego-consciousness. You have to throw down that barrier and widen yourself out. You have to will for it, exert for it with a settled constancy. There is the pressure on the other side too, the pressure of Grace. Your aspiring will meeting the Grace will surely make the necessary opening in the dead wall.

THE COMING OF SUPERMAN

Is it said that when the supramental descends, it will come with such an overwhelming and irresistible force that all humanity will be changed forthwith, that is to say, all men whether they wanted it or not, sought for it or not, would be automatically transformed? It cannot be so: it is a comfortable doctrine putting a premium on laziness and inertia.

There is no necessity of all men turning supermen, the normal human race disappearing altogether. Mankind need not become extinct like the ancient Mammoth and Mastodon in order to give place to Superman. Both the races can dwell together; earth is wide enough. Man has appeared; for that reason the ape has not disappeared, although it is said man came out of the ape genus. The superman will come and live with his new law of life; man too will continue with his human dharma. Not only so, they need not be separated into water-tight compartments, there may be interaction or interchange between the two. With the coming of Superman there will naturally be a descent of harmony and peace and happiness and

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good will into the earth's atmosphere and mankind is likely to be benefited by it. The conditions of life will be changed and will affect man's life too. An element of light and joy and tranquillity will enter into humanity's normal dealings. And man, on his side, may offer his services as the recruiting ground of the super-race. Furthermore, the whole of Nature being a unified movement, no level of creation being totally separate from others, the change may very well touch the animal and even the vegetable kingdom. The plant may put on, for example, a luminous or greener tint and the animal may develop a happier and livelier spring. There may be less scarcity, dearth, aridity, less convulsions and catastrophes on earth.

Always, however, exceptions are possible. Even now, where conditions of life are happier and things are expected to be more smooth and harmonious, there exist people who are by nature so obscure, quarrelsome and turbulent that they are not touched at all and go on in their way finding always occasions to quarrel and fight and create trouble. They will be in the midst of the new humanity as Hottentots or Headhunters—aborigines and savages—are today in the eye of civilised humanity.

TOWARDS REDEMPTION

As I have often said, creation is the self-objectivisation of the Supreme Divine; it is the supreme consciousness putting itself out of itself so that it may look at itself. In so doing—in self-objectifying and self-dividing—it scattered itself abroad: the one infinite multiplied itself into infinite atoms. Not only so, in detaching itself from itself the consciousness became the very opposite of itself: consciousness became unconsciousness, spirit became matter, delight became pain, knowledge became ignorance, and light became darkness. Boundless universality was the essential nature of the Divine, now it got clotted into the knots of egoism upon which is based this inconscient creation. In the midst of this utter negation, this denial by the universe of its origin, the Divine Love descended and lodged itself in order to bring back the erring creation to its lost home. The Divine Love became involved and entangled in the Inconscient, became one with it; only so could she (it was indeed the Divine Mother in her Grace) suffuse the inconscient universe with her own substance and transmute it into its original nature. The first effect or visible sign of this descent or divine infusion is the emergence of the psychic or the soul element in the material body: it is the speck of consciousness imbedded in matter, inhabiting the apparently dead particle

TOWARDS REDEMPTION

or aggregate of particles, which continually grows in and through its relation of action and reaction with its surrounding unconsciousness, and at the same time extending its light into that darkness transforms it gradually into what it was originally at its source.

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The origin of creation is an individualisation—the manifestation or emanation of many, as units, out of the undivided and indivisible Single. It meant freedom for each unit to choose: the individual became, so to say, a unit of freedom. The immediate result, however, was not very successful, apparently, that is to say. For the individual unit chose to follow a path exactly opposite to its origin: the individualisation happened as if an element shot out of the infinite unity and flung itself in its momentum, as far away as possible, to the other pole. That is how the one spirit became the infinite particles of incontinent matter. The purpose and problem then set was to bring back the straying elements to their source and origin. The work was long travail. It took and it is taking even now ages and ages for the one Being who could do the thing to prepare slowly, mount the steps gradually along which creation slid down, recover the ground painfully and achieve the hidden purpose, vindicating amply the deviation and the fall. Through devious ways, long windings, arduous marches the spirit of evolution laboured through millenniums: it was the instrument utilised by the Divine Grace.

The original individual was a hard concentrated point of ego, concerned wholly and absolutely with itself. So a situation of give and take was brought about so that even to exist meant to exist through others. Human society began in this way. The solitary human animal for its own sake had to come out of its solitariness, take to a mate and thus gradually bring up a family. The wall of egoism was broken to that extent, its scope extended. This enlargement of the ego continued—still continues—increasing the content of the unity. From the family the human ego enlarged into the tribe, and the tribal ego has now enlarged into the nation. Larger and larger aggregates are being formed in place of the original individual unities. The nations too are now approaching and interpenetrating each other and in many ways the whole of humanity has begun moving as an aggregate. The individual has thus learnt to find himself in the life of humanity as a whole. He has to look up—or will soon have to look up—to the whole creation as one existence in and through which he has to exist. Thus the universe is

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recovering its original indivisible unity, but having gained something in the process; for it is now no longer the featureless unity at the source but an enriched and multiple unity in expression. Furthermore the individual can proceed yet beyond. He has to and now is able to, not only in his individual but in his collective consciousness—turn back and move straight to its original unity: he can establish direct contact, commune and unite with the Divine Himself from whom it came and strayed away. The ranges of ascent are within him and are in line with those outside which the universe is traversing in the path of evolution. Such is the process the Divine Grace has undertaken to fulfil the Divine's purpose in creation.

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The earliest sense of "ego" or "I" is limited and confined to one's own self as against others and other things. It is then that one has the feeling of want and asks for things he has not. He has shut out from his wingspread men and things, of his own accord, to enjoy his individual free will: he is now compelled to ask of them materials to enjoy, to grow and increase, even to exist. On the other hand, if you enlarge yourself, if you identify yourself with all, then you find all things within yourself, you have no need to go out and seek for them, you have no feeling of want. Whatever is needed to be brought and utilised for a definite purpose or in a particular circumstance, at a certain time or place, is automatically presented then and there. You do not however lose your real "I". Your "I" finds its "I" in all other "I"s and all other "I"s in the "I" you call yourself. You have lost your old ego, the small narrow person, and transcended and transmuted it into the cosmic and transcendental ego. The Divine is that ego and that individual person. In reality it is the Divine alone who is that, in the supreme and truest sense.

SWEET HOLY TEARS*

The tears that the soul sheds are holy, are sweet; they come bidden by the Divine and are blessed by His Presence. They are like dews from heaven. For they are pure, they are spontaneous, welling out of a heart of innocent freedom. The feeling is infinitely impersonal, completely egoless:

* *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, July 12, 1918

SWEET HOLY TEARS

there is only an intense movement of self-giving, total simple self-giving. Tears are the natural expression in one who needs help, who has the complete surrender and simplicity of a child, the abdication of all vanity. Such tears are beautiful in their nature and beneficent in character. They are therefore like dewdrops that belong to heaven as it were and come from there with a sovereign healing virtue. Such tears are not "idle tears", as the English poet says in a vein of melancholy, they are instinct with a power, an effective energy which brings you relief, ease and peace. And it is not only pure but purifying, this feeling made of quiet intensity and aspiration and surrender: it is unmixed, free from any demand or need of reward or return; it is so impersonal that the aspiration is, so to say, even independent of the object for which it exists.

At a supreme crisis of the soul when there seems to be no issue before you, if you come, in the naked simplicity of your whole being, pour yourself out in a flood of self-giving, to one who can be your refuge—in the end the Divine alone can be such a one—and who can respond fully to the intensity and ardent sincerity of your approach, you come holding your tearful soul as a complete self-offering, you do not know what tremendous response you call forth, the blessing divine you bring down in and around you.

"I prepared the Feast"*

It was a banquet I prepared for men. Instead of a life of misery and suffering, of obscurity and ignorance I brought to them a life of light and joy and freedom. I took all the pains the task demanded and when it was ready I offered it to mankind to partake of it. But man in his foolishness and pig-headedness refused it, did not want it. He preferred to remain in his dark miserable hole. Now, what am I to do with my Feast? I cannot let it go waste, throw it to the winds. So I offered it to my Lord and laid it at his feet. He accepted it. He alone can enjoy it and honour it.

The Feast is that of Transformation, the Divine Life on earth. Man is not capable of it naturally, cannot attain it by his own effort or personal worth. It is the Divine who is to bring it down himself. He is to manifest Himself and thus establish his own life here below. Then only it will be possible for the human creature to open to the urgency of the new beauty and offer his surrender.

* *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—September 3, 1919

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It was not easy to prepare the Feast. I had to bear the full load of the cross and ascend the calvary. Jesus as he mounted to his destiny with the Cross on his back stumbled often and fell and rose again with bruised limbs to begin again the arduous journey. Even so, this being too had to go through many disillusionings and deceptions, many painful and brutal experiences. It was not a smooth and straight going, but a tortuous and dangerous ascent. But at the end of the tunnel there is always the light. The calvary and the crucifixion culminated in the Resurrection; the divine Passion of Christ flowered into this supreme Recompense. Here too after all the dark and adverse vicissitudes lies the fulfilment of transformation. One must pass through the entire valley of death and rise to the topmost summit to receive and achieve the fullness of the glory. One must leave behind all the lower ranges of ignorance, the entire domain of human consciousness, come out of the imperfection man is made of; then only will he put on the divine nature as his own body and substance.

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The Cross symbolises all the suffering and difficulty, the renunciation and self-denudation that the ascent to the Goal involves. The Calvary of the Christian legend means Ascension and Resurrection is Transformation in our sadhana. The Cross is also symbolic of the Transformed consciousness. It has three branches and represents the triple Divine, the Divine in his three modes of existence. The top branch, the vertical portion above the transverse line, stands for the supreme or transcendent Divine, one who is above manifestation; the middle—the transverse or horizontal branch stands for the expanse of the universal consciousness, the Cosmic Divine; and the bottom portion, the vertical line below the transverse stands for the individual Divine immanent or imbedded in the manifestation. You will note that the flower we call transformation has a form analogous to the Cross.

SONNETS

I

THE INNER FIELDS

THERE is a brighter ether than this blue
Pretence of an enveloping heavenly vault,
A deeper greenness than this laughing assault*
Of emerald rapture pearled with tears of dew.
Immortal spaces of cerulean hue
Are in our reach and fields without this fault
Of drab brown earth and streams that never halt
In their deep murmur which white flowers strew

Floating like stars upon a strip of sky.
This world behind is made of truer stuff
Than the manufactured tissue of earth's grace.
There we can walk and see the gods go by
And sip from Hebe's cup nectar enough
To make for us heavenly limbs and deathless face.

14-3-1947

SRI AUROBINDO

* Royaler investiture than this massed assault

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II

FORM

O WORSHIPPER of the formless Infinite,
Reject not form, what lives in form is He.¹
Each finite is that deep Infinity
Enshrining His veiled soul of pure delight.
Form in its heart of silence recondite
Hides the significance of His mystery,
Form is the wonder-house of eternity,
A cavern of the deathless Eremite.

There is a beauty in the depths of God,
There is a miracle of the Marvellous
That builds the universe for its abode.
The One, in His glory multitudinous,
Bursting into shape and colour like a rose,
Compels the great world-petals to unclothe.

16-11-1938

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ what dwells in it is He

HYMN TO INDRA*

1. Indra the Udgathins, Indra the masters of Rik with their thoughts of substance, Indra the voices desired.

2. Indra is made one with our being by the love of the two Bright Ones yoked to speech, Indra of the brilliance, the wielder of the thunderbolt.

3. Indra for far vision ascends in Heaven up to the sun, he manifests the mountain to all sides with those lustres.

4. Indra protect us in our store of strength and in our strong possessions, fierce with fierce raptures.¹

5. Indra we call in great wealth, Indra in little, the thunderer assailing the Vritras.

6. Therefore do thou, O supreme, remove this film from our being and be to us unconcealed.

7. The praises of Indra the thunderer which rise from layer² to higher layer,³ in all I find, not his perfect praise.

8. As a yoked bull with its mate he in his might goeth to the powers that work upon us and rules unconcealed.

9. Indra who alone disposes all actions and possessions of the five planes.

10. Indra for the people we call in everything that concerns you; may he be to us absolute and free.

SRI AUROBINDO

* Rig Veda: I. 7. Rishi: Madhucchandas

¹ pulsations of being

² height

³ height

ON TRANSLATING THE UPANISHADS*

THIS translation of a few of the simpler and more exoteric Upanishads to be followed by other sacred and philosophical writings of the Hindus not included in the Revealed Scriptures, all under the one title of the Book of God, has been effected on one definite and unvarying principle, to present to England and through England to Europe the religious message of India only in those parts of her written thought which the West is fit to hear and to present these in such a form as should be attractive and suggestive to the Occidental intellect. The first branch of this principle necessitated a rigid selection on definite lines, the second dictated the choice of a style and method of rendering which should be literary rather than literal.

The series of translations called the Sacred Books of the East, edited by the late Professor Max Muller, was executed in a scholastic and peculiar spirit. Professor Max Muller, a scholar of wide attainments, great versatility and a refreshingly active, ingenious and irresponsible fancy, has won considerable respect in India by his attachment to Vedic studies, but it must fairly be recognised that he was more of a grammarian and philologist, than a sound Sanscrit scholar. He could construe Sanscrit well enough, but he could not feel the language or realise the spirit behind the letter. Accordingly he committed two serious errors of judgment; he imagined that by sitting in Oxford and evolving new meanings out of his own brilliant fancy he could understand the Upanishads better than Shankaracharya or any other Hindu of parts and learning; and he also imagined that what was important for Europe to know about the Upanishads was what he and other European scholars considered they ought to mean. This, however, is a matter of no importance to anybody but the scholars themselves. What it is really important for Europe to know is in the first place what the Upanishads really do mean, so far as their exoteric teaching extends, and in a

* Old writing. Obviously, these pages were written as an Introduction to his first translations of the Upanishads—*The Editor*.

ON TRANSLATING THE UPANISHADS

less degree what philosophic Hinduism took them to mean. The latter knowledge may be gathered from the commentaries of Shankaracharya and other philosophers which may be studied in the original or in their translations which the Dravidian Presidency, ignorantly called benighted by the materialists, has been issuing with a truly noble learning and high-minded enterprise. The former this book makes some attempt to convey.

But it may be asked, why these particular Upanishads alone, when there are so many others far larger in plan and of a not inferior importance. In answer I may quote a sentence from Professor Max Muller's Preface to the *Sacred Books of the East*. "I confess" he says "it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellent". Now, I myself being only a poor coarse-minded Oriental and therefore not disposed to deny the gross physical facts of life and nature or able to see why we should scuttle them out of sight and put on a smug, respectable expression which suggests while it affects to hide their existence. This perhaps is the reason why I am somewhat at a loss to imagine what the Professor found in the Upanishads that is hideous and repellent. Still I was brought up almost from my infancy in England and received an English education, so that I have glimmerings. But as to what he intends by the unmeaning, artificial and silly elements, there can be no doubt. Everything is unmeaning in the Upanishads which the Europeans cannot understand, everything is artificial which does not come within the circle of their mental experience and every thing is silly which is not explicable by European science and wisdom. Now this attitude is almost inevitable on the part of an European, for we all judge according to our lights and those who keep their minds really open, who can realise that there may be lights which are not theirs and yet as illuminating or more illuminating than theirs, are in any nation a very small handful. For the most part men are the slaves of their associations.

Let us suppose that the ceremonies and services of the Roman Catholic were not mere ceremonies and formularies, borrowed for the most part from Eastern occultisms without understanding them,—that they had been arranged so as to be perfect symbols of certain deep metaphysical truths and, to produce certain effects spiritual and material according to a scientific knowledge of the power of sound over both mind and matter; let us suppose that deep philosophical works had been written in the terminology

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of these symbols and often in a veiled allusive language; and let us suppose finally that these were translated into Bengali or Hindustani and presented to an educated Pundit who had studied both at Calcutta and at Nuddia or Benares, what would he make of them? It will be as well to take a concrete instance. Jesus Christ was a great thinker, a man who had caught, apparently by his unaided power, though this is not certain, something of the divine knowledge, but the writers who recorded his sayings were for the most part ordinary men of a very narrow culture and scope of thought and they seem grossly to have misunderstood his deepest sayings. For instance, when he said "I and my Father are one", expressing the deep truth that the human self and the divine self are identical, they imagined that he was setting up an individual claim to be God; hence the extraordinary legend of the Virgin Mary and all that followed from it. Well, we all know the story of the Last Supper and Jesus' marvellously pregnant utterance as he broke the bread and gave of the wine to his disciples "This is my body and this is my blood", and the remarkable rite of the Eucharist and the doctrine of Transubstantiation which the Roman Catholic Church have founded upon it. "Corruption! superstition! blasphemous nonsense!" cries the Protestant: "Only a vivid Oriental metaphor and nothing more". If so, it was certainly an "unmeaning, artificial and silly" metaphor, nay, "even a hideous and repellent" one. But I prefer to believe that Jesus' words had always a meaning, generally a true and beautiful one. On the other hand, the Transubstantiation doctrine is one which the Catholics themselves do not understand, it is to them a "mystery". And yet how plain the meaning is to the Oriental intelligence! The plasm of matter, the food-sheath of the universe to which bread and wine belong, is rendered the blood and body of God and typifies the great primal sacrifice by which God crucified himself so that the world might exist: The Infinite had to become finite, the Unconditioned to condition himself, Spirit to evolve Matter. In the bread and the wine which the communicant eats, God actually is, but he is not present to our consciousness, and he only becomes so present (here to our consciousness) by an act of faith; this is the whole doctrine of the Transubstantiation. For, as the Upanishad says, we must believe in God before we can know him; we must realise him as the "He is" before we realise him in his essential. And indeed if the child had not believed in what his teacher or his book told him, how could the grown man know anything? But if a deep philosophical work were written on the Eucharist hinting at great truths but always using the symbol of the bread and wine

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and making its terminology from the symbol and from the doctrine of Transubstantiation based upon the symbol, what would our Hindu Pundit make of it? Being a scholar and philosopher, he would find there undoubtedly much that was "fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true" but also a great deal that was "unmeaning, artificial and silly" and to his vegetarian imagination "even hideous and repellent." As for the symbol itself, its probable effect on the poor vegetarian would be to make him vomit. "What hideous nonsense," says the Protestant, "we are to believe that we are eating God!" How shall such an one know of Him where He abideth?

Many of the Upanishads similarly are written round symbols and in a phraseology and figures which have or had once a deep meaning and a sacred association to the Hindus but must be unintelligible and repellent to the European. What possible use can be served by presenting to Europe such works as the Chhandogya or Aitareya Upanishads in which even the majority of Hindus find it difficult or impossible to penetrate every symbol to its underlying truth? Only the few Upanishads have been selected which contain the kernel of the matter in the least technical and most poetical form; the one exception is the Upanishad of the Questions which will be necessarily strange and not quite penetrable to the European mind. It was, however, necessary to include it for the sake of a due presentation of Upanishad philosophy in some of its details as well as in its main ideas, and its technical element has a more universal appeal than that of the Chhandogya and Taittiriya.

An objection may be urged to the method of translation that has been adopted. Professor Max Muller in his translation did not make any attempt to render into English the precise shades of Aryan philosophical terms like Atman and Prana which do not correspond to any philosophical conception familiar to the West; he believed that the very unfamiliarity of the terms he used to translate them would be like a bracing splash of cold water to the mind forcing it to rouse itself and think. In this I think the Professor was in error; his proposition may be true of undaunted philosophical intellects such as Schopenhauer's or of those who are already somewhat familiar with the Sanscrit language, but to the ordinary reader the unfamiliar and unexplained terminology forms a high and thick hedge of brambles shutting him off from the noble palace and beautiful gardens of the Upanishads. Moreover, the result of a scholastic faithfulness to the letter has been to make the style of the translation intolerably uncouth and unworthy of these great religious poems. I do not say that this translation is worthy

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of them, for in no other human tongue than Sanscrit is such grandeur and beauty possible. But there are ways and their degrees. For instance, *etad-vai tad*, the refrain of the Katha Upanishad has a deep and solemn ring in Sanscrit because *etad* and *tad* so used have in Sanscrit a profound and grandiose philosophical signification which everybody at once feels; but in English "This truly is that" can be nothing but a juggling with demonstrative pronouns; it renders more nearly both rhythm and meaning to translate "This is the God of your seeking", however inadequate such a translation may be.

It may, however, fairly be said that a version managed on these lines cannot give a precise and accurate idea of the meaning. It is misleading to translate Prana sometimes by life, sometimes by breath, sometimes by life breath or breath of life; because breath and life are merely subordinate aspects of the Prana. Atman again rendered indifferently by soul, spirit and self, must mislead, because what the West calls the soul is really the Atman yoked with mind and intelligence, and spirit is a word of variable connotation often synonymous with soul; even self cannot be used precisely in that way in English. Again the Hindu idea of "immortality" is different from the European; it implies not life after death, but freedom from both life and death; for what we call life is after all impossible without death. Similarly Being does not render *Purusha*, nor "matter" *rayi*, nor askesis the whole idea of *tapas*. To a certain extent all this may be admitted, but at the same time I do not think that any reader who can think and feel will be seriously misled, and at any rate he will catch more of the meaning from imperfect English substitutes than from Sanscrit terms which will be a blank to his intelligence. The mind of man demands, and the demand is legitimate, that new ideas shall be presented to him in words which convey to him some associations with which he will not feel like a foreigner in a strange country where no one knows his language, nor he theirs. The new must be presented to him in the terms of the old; new wine must be put to some extent in old bottles. What is the use of avoiding the word "God" and speaking always of the Supreme as "It" simply because the Sanscrit usually,—but not, be it observed, invariably,—employs the neuter gender? The neuter in Sanscrit applies not only to what is inanimate, not only to what is below gender but to what is above gender. In English this is not the case. The use of "It" may therefore lead to far more serious misconceptions than to use the term "God" and the pronoun "He". When Mathew Arnold said that God was a stream of tendency making towards righteousness,

ON TRANSLATING THE UPANISHADS

men naturally scoffed because it seemed to turn God into an inanimate force; yet surely such was not Arnold's meaning. On the other side, if the new ideas are presented with force and power, a reader of intelligence will soon come to understand that something different is meant by "God" from what ideas he attaches to that word. And in the meanwhile we gain this distinct advantage that he has not been repelled at the outset by what would naturally seem to him bizarre, repulsive or irreverent.

It is true however that this translation will not convey a precise, full and categorical knowledge of the truths which underlie the Upanishad. To convey such knowledge is not the object of this translation, neither was it the object of the Upanishads themselves. It must always be remembered that these great treatises are simply the gate of the Higher Knowledge; there is much that lies behind the gate. Sri Krishna has indeed said that the knowledge in the Vedas is sufficient for a holy mind that is capable of knowing God, just as the water in a well is sufficient for a man's purpose though there may be whole floods of water all around. But this does not apply to ordinary men. The ordinary man who wishes to reach God through knowledge, must undergo an elaborate training. He must begin by becoming absolutely pure, he must cleanse thoroughly his body, his heart and his intellect, he must get himself a new heart and be born again; for only the twice-born can understand or teach the Vedas. When he has done this he needs yet four things before he can succeed, the Sruti or recorded revelation, the Sacred Teacher, the practice of Yoga and the Grace of God. The business of the Sruti and especially of the Upanishads is to seize the mind and draw it into a magic circle, to accustom it to the thoughts and aspirations of God (after the Supreme), to bathe it in certain ideas, surround it with a certain spiritual atmosphere; for this purpose it plunges and rolls the mind over and over in an ocean of marvellous sound through which a certain train of associations goes ever rolling. In other words it appeals through the intellect, the ear and the imagination to the soul. The purpose of the Upanishad cannot therefore be served by a translation; a translation at best prepares him for and attracts him to the original. But even when he has steeped himself in the original, he may have understood what the Upanishad suggests, but he has not understood all that it implies; the great mass of religious truth that lies behind, of which the Upanishad is but a hint or an echo. For this he must go to the Teacher. "Awake ye, arise and learn of God, seeking out the Best who have the knowledge". Hard is it in these days to find the Best, for the Best do not come to us, we have to

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show our sincerity, patience and perseverance by seeking them. And when we have heard the whole of the Brahmanvidya from the Teacher, we still know of God by theory only; we must further learn from a preceptor the practical knowledge of God, the vision of Him and attainment of Him which is Yoga and the goal of Yoga. And even in that we cannot succeed unless we have the Grace of God; for Yoga is beset with temptations not the least of which are the powers it gives us, powers which the ignorant call supernatural. "Then must a man be very vigilant for Yoga, as it hath a beginning, so hath it an ending". Only the Grace of God can keep us firm and help us over the temptations. "The spirit is not to be won" etc...the blessing of triumphant self-mastery that comes from long and patient accumulation of soul experience. Truly does the Upanishad say "Sharp as a razor's edge is the path difficult and hard to traverse, say the seers". Fortunately it is not necessary and indeed it is not possible for all to measure the whole journey in a single life, nor can we or should we abandon our daily duties like the Buddha and flee into the mountain or the forest. It is enough for us to make a beginning.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE BHAGAVAD GITA

(A Translation)

CHAPTER VI

KRISHNA

WHO doeth the works he hath to do but dependeth not on the fruit of his works, he is the Sannyasin, and he is the Yogin, and not he who lighteth not the daily fire and doeth not the daily ritual. Know, O son of Pandou, that what they have called renunciation is even Yoga, since no man becometh a Yogin if he hath not renounced the imaginations of the Will. Of the sage who has yet to ascend the hill of Yoga, works are the medium, but calm is the medium of him who sitteth already on the hill-tops. For when a man has renounced all the imaginings of the Will and his heart clings not to his works and clings not to the objects of the senses, that is the true Sannyasin, that is the sitter on the hill-top of Yoga. Let a man deliver his soul by its own strength and let him not afflict his spirit to weaken it; for a man's Self is its own and only friend and its own and only enemy. To that man his Self is a friend who has conquered the Self by the Self, but when he is not in possession of his Self it worketh enmity against him like an outward foe. Now when he has mastered Self and is at peace, then the Self of him is utterly at its ease, unaffected by heat and cold, pleasure and pain, imperturbable in honour and disgrace. The Yogin whose soul is satisfied with Wisdom and discernment, the immovable sitter on his hill-top and victor over his senses, he alone is called the Yogin who hath the Yoga; and gold and gravel or stone, to him all are one substance. He who hath one heart for lover, and friend, and foeman and those who care not for him, who maketh no difference between the saint and the sinner, he is the truly great among men. Let the Yogin gird his Self continually to Yoga,

* From old writings

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solitary, governed in heart and spirit, without desires and without the sense of belongings. In a pure and holy region let him set up his steady seat, neither very high nor very low, with grass of *cusha* and a deerskin thereon, and on that a robe. Then with his mind directed to one point, with a rein on the workings of his heart and senses, let him sit on the seat he has made and betake himself to Yoga for the cleansing of the Self within. He shall sit steady, holding head and neck and body in one line and motionless, and he shall keep his gaze fixed on the joining point of his nostrils, so that his eyes shall not wander over the regions; so steadfast in the vow of abstinence and purity, with a glad and calm spirit from which fear hath been driven out, with a mind under restraint, with a heart full of Me, let him sit in Yoga, giving himself utterly to Me. Even if he yoke himself so to Yoga with a governed heart, the Yogin reacheth to that Peace in Me of which cessation in the Eternal is the summit. Yoga is not for the over-eater, neither can a man get Yoga by abstaining utterly from food, nor for him that is overgiven to sleep nor yet for him that waketh always. Whoso eateth and playeth with his mind in God, whose striving in his works, and his sleep and his waking is for Him, Yoga cometh to that man and slayeth his sorrows. When the mind is wholly under government, and stands well-tamed in the Self, when all desirable things cannot get the heart to hunger after them, then a man is said to be in Yoga. Even as the flame of a lamp in a windless place moveth not at all, such is the image men have handed down of a Yogin when he practiseth Yoga with his heart under rein. Where the heart is sucked in from its workings by the practice of Yoga, where by the strength of the Self the mind of man seeth the Self and is wholly satisfied in the Self, where his inward spirit knoweth that extreme and exceeding happiness which is beyond the reach of the senses and which the reason cannot grasp, and it cleaveth to it and moveth not from the truth of things—which when a man has won he cannot conceive of any greater gain, to which when he holds he cannot be moved there from even by the most sore poignant grief—know that for a man's divorce from his long wedlock with sorrow, which is called Yoga; resolutely should a man set himself to that Yoga with a heart that will not despair. Let him relinquish all the desires that are born of the Will's imaginings, not keeping one back for his comfort. He must surround with his mind and force in from their delight the cohort of the senses; so with the understanding self held well within the grasp of a strong control he must cabin in the mind to the Self and think of nothing at all. Whenever and to whatever side darts

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away the infirm and restless mind thou must curb it from its journey to bring it back within the Self and tame it to obedience—for a high beatitude cometh to such a Yogi, whose mind is calmed, whose active nature is tranquillised, who has no sin, who has wholly become Brahman. Easily shall the Yogi who ever thus setteth himself to Yoga put from him the stain of obscuration, easily feel the utter bliss and the touch divine. The soul that is set in Yoga seeth himself in all creatures and all creatures in himself, and he hath one heart for all beings that the world containeth. When a man seeth Me everywhere and all the world in Me, I am with him always and he is always with Me, and we are lost to each other never. When the Yogin becometh one with all beings and loveth Me in all creatures, though he live and move in all manner of activities, he liveth and doeth only in Me. For him I deem to be the greatest Yogin, O Urjoona, who looks alike on all beings everywhere as if they were his own self, whether it be for happiness or whether it be for pain.

URJOONA

Nay, Madhusudan, for the restlessness of man's mind I can see no sure abiding in this Yoga of one-heartedness of which thou hast spoken. For very restless is the mind, O Krishna, and turbulent and strong and hard of mouth, and to rein it in I hold as difficult as to put a bridle upon the wind.

KRISHNA

Surely, O strong of arm, the mind is restless and hard to bridle, but by askesis, O son of Coonty, and by turning away the heart from its affections, it can be caught and controlled. Very difficult of attainment is Yoga to the ungoverned spirit, so I hold; but when a man governeth himself and striveth by the right means, Yoga is not impossible to attain.

URJOONA

When a man hath faith but cannot strive aright and his mind swerveth from Yoga, and he attaineth not to success in Yoga, what is the last state of such a man, O Krishna? Does he lose this world and that other, does he perish like a breaking cloud, failing, O strong-armed, to get his

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immortal seat, losing his way on the path of the Eternal? This doubt of mine must thou solve to its very heart, O Krishna, for I shall not find any other who can destroy this doubt, but only Thee.

KRISHNA

Neither in this world nor in the other, Partha, is there for that man any perdition. None who doeth good can come to an evil end, O beloved. But to the world of the righteous he goeth and there dwelleth for endless seasons and then is born again, the man fallen from Yoga, in a house of pure and fortunate men. Or else he even cometh to being in the house of the wise, in a land of Yogins, for such a birth as this in this world is one of the hardest to win. There he getteth touch again with the mind he had in his former body, and with that to start him he striveth yet harder after perfection, O delight of the Kurus. For he is seized and hurried forward even by that former habit and askesis of his, though it be without his own will. Even if a man's mind is curious after Yoga, he overpasseth the outer Brahman in the Word. The Yogin earnestly striving is purified of sin; perfected by toil of many births he arriveth at his highest salvation. Greater than the man of askesis is the Yogin, and greater I hold him even than the men of Knowledge, and than the men of works he is surely greater: a Yogin, therefore, shouldst thou be, O Urjoona. And of all that are Yogins I deem him to have most yoga who, with his inner Self taking refuge in Me, hath faith in Me, and loveth Me and worshippeth Me.

SRI AUROBINDO

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES*

(New Series)

GOD has made this world a field of battle and filled it with the trampling of combatants and the cries of slaughter and struggle. Would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it?

Sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice always, but for the sake of God and humanity, not for the sake of sacrifice.

Selfishness kills the soul; destroy it. But take care that your altruism does not kill the souls of others.

Very usually, altruism is only the sublimest form of selfishness.

* * *

Meanness and selfishness are the only sins that I find it difficult to pardon; yet they alone are almost universal. Therefore these also must not be hated in others, but in ourselves annihilated.

Nobleness and generosity are the soul's ethereal firmament; without them, one looks as an insect in a dungeon.

Let thy virtues be not such as men praise or reward, but such as make for thy perfection and God in thy nature demands of thee.

Altruism, duty, family, country, humanity are the prisons of the soul when they are not its instruments.

* * *

Break the moulds of the past, but keep safe its genius and its spirit, or else thou hast no future.

* From old writings

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Revolutions hew the past to pieces and cast it into a cauldron, but what has emerged is the old Aeson with a new visage.

The world has had only half a dozen successful revolutions and most even of these were very like failures; yet it is by great and noble failures that humanity advances.

Distrust perfect success, but when having succeeded thou findest still much to do, rejoice and go forward; for the labour is long before the real perfection.

There is no more benumbing error than to mistake a stage for the goal or to linger too long in a resting-place.

* * *

Sannyasa has a formal garb and outer tokens; therefore men think they can easily recognise it; but the freedom of a Janaka does not proclaim itself and it wears the garb of the world; to its presence even Narada was blinded.

Hard is it to be in the world, free, yet living the life of ordinary men; but because it is hard, therefore it must be attempted and accomplished.

When he watched the actions of Janaka, even Narada the divine sage thought him a luxurious worldling and libertine. Unless thou canst see the soul, how shalt thou say that a man is free or bound?

All things seem hard that are above his attained level and they are hard to his unaided effort; but they become at once easy and simple when God in man takes up the contract.

* * *

Selfishness is the only sin, meanness the only vice, hatred the only criminality. All else can easily be turned into good, but these are obstinate resisters of deity.

SRI AUROBINDO

SAT*

WHAT is Truth? said Pilate confronted with a mighty messenger of the truth, not jesting surely, not in a spirit of shallow lightness, but turning away from the Christ with the impatience of the disillusioned soul for those who still use high words that have lost their meaning and believe in great ideals which the test of the event has proved to be fallacious. What is truth,—this phantom so long pursued, so impossible to grasp firmly,—that a man young, beautiful, gifted, eloquent and admired should consent to be crucified for its sake? Have not circumstance and event justified the half-pitying, half-sorrowful question of the Roman governor? The Messenger suffered on the cross, and what happened to the truth that was his message? The Christ himself foresaw, it has never been understood even by its professors. For a hundred years it was a glorious mirage for which thousands of men and women willingly underwent imprisonment, torture and death in order that Christ's kingdom might come on earth and felicity possess the nations. But the kingdom that came was not Christ's; it was Constantine's, it was Hildebrand's, it was Alexander Borgia's. For another thirteen centuries the message was—what? Has it not been the chief support of fanaticism, falsehood, cruelty and hypocrisy, the purveyor of selfish power, the key-stone of a society that was everything Christ had denounced? Jesus died on the Cross, for the benefit, it would seem, of those who united to slay him, the Sadducee, atheist and high priest, the Pharisee, zealot or hypocrite and persecutor and the brutal, self-seeking, callous military Roman. Now in its last state, after such a lamentable career, Christ's truth stands finally rejected by the world's recent enlightenment as a hallucination or a superstition which sometimes helpfully, sometimes harmfully, amused the infancy of the human intellect. This history is written in too pronounced characters to be the exact type of all messages that the world has received, but is it not in some sort a type of the fate of all truth? What idea has stood

* From old writings

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successfully the test of a prolonged and pitiless enquiry? What ideal has stood successfully the test of time? Has not mankind been busy for the last fifty years and more denying almost all that it had formerly affirmed? And now that under the name of rationalism or materialism the denial has shaped itself into some form of workable practical affirmation, mankind is again at the work of denying its denial and rearranging—but this time doubtfully—its old affirmations. The scepticism of Pilate would therefore seem to have some excuse in a recurrent human experience. Is there, indeed, such a thing as truth,—beyond of course that practical truth of persistent and material appearances by which we govern our lives, the truth of death, birth, hunger, sexuality, pain, pleasure, commerce, money-making, ease, discomfort, ambition, failure and success? Has not indeed the loftiest of our philosophical systems declared all things here to be Maya? And if Maya is illusion, a deceit of the thinking consciousness, then indeed there can be no truth anywhere in the world except that indefinable Existence which we cannot comprehend and which, after all, Buddhism, not without logic and plausibility, setting it down as another and more generalised *samskāra*, a false sensation of consciousness in the eternal Void, denies. And yet man is so constituted that he must follow after truth whether it is attained or not; something in him secretly masterful, essential to his existence, forbids him to be satisfied with a falsehood; the moment it is perceived or even believed to be a falsehood, he rejects it and the thing begins to crumble. If he persists in his rejection, it cannot last. Yesterday it was, today we see it tottering, tomorrow we shall look for it and find that it is no longer. It has passed back into Prakriti; it has dissolved into that of which it was made. For *śraddhā* is the condition of all existence in consciousness and that in which *śraddhā* is denied, ceases to have existence, whether here or elsewhere, *na, caivāmutra no iha*. It is not, neither in this world nor in another. We may not unreasonably infer from this importance and this imperative necessity that Truth does really exist and everything is not illusion. If then Truth is always escaping our hold and leaving us to disillusionment and derision, it may be because we have niether formed any clear conception of what Truth itself is nor taken hold of the right means by which it can be grasped. Let us leave aside, for a while, Buddha's world of *samskāras*; let us put aside, packed away in an accessible corner of the brain, Shankara's gospel of Maya, and start instead from the old Vedantic beginnings, OM TAT SAT, That (Brahman) is the thing that Is, and *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*, verily, *all this*, everything of which we are aware, is Brahman. It

is at least possible that we may return from this inquiry with a deeper idea both of Samskaras and of Maya and may find that we have answered Pilate's question, discovering the nature and conditions of Truth.

I am speaking of the fundamental truth, the truth of things and not merely the fact about particulars or of particulars only as their knowledge forms a basis or a help to the discovery of fundamental truth. The fact that a particular sort of contact makes me uncomfortable is nothing in itself except in so far as it throws light upon the general causes of pain; the nature, origin and purpose of pain is the fundamental truth that I seek about the sensational reaction to contact. This law of pain, moreover, is not so fundamental as the truth about the nature, origin and purpose of sensation and contact themselves of which pain is a particularity, an example or a modification. This more fundamental truth becomes again itself particular when compared with the truth about the nature, origin and purpose of Existence of which sensation and contact are only particular circumstances. In this we arrive at the one fundamental truth of all, and a little consideration will show that if we really and rightly know that, the rest ought and probably will reveal themselves at once and fall into their places. *Tasmin vijnāte sarvam vijnātam*, That being known, all is known. Our ancestors perceived this truth of the fundamental unity of knowledge and sought to know Sat first, confident that Sat being known, the different *tattwas*, laws, aspects and particulars of Sat would more readily yield up their secret. The moderns follow another thought which, also, has a truth of its own. They think that since being is one, the knowledge of the particulars must lead to the knowledge of the fundamental unity and they begin therefore at the bottom and climb upwards,—a slow but, one might imagine, a safe method of procession. "Little flower in the crannies", cries Tennyson addressing a pretty blossom in the wall in lines which make good thought but execrable poetry, "if I could but know what you are I should know what God and man is".¹ Undoubtedly; the question is whether, without knowing God, we can really know the flower,—know *it*, and not merely its name and form or all the details of its name and form. Rupa we can know and analyse

¹ Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

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by the aid of science, Nama by the aid of philosophy; but Swarupa? It would seem that some third instrument is needed for that consummation of knowledge. The senses and reason, even though aided by microscopes and telescopes, cannot show it to us. *Na sandriṣe tiṣṭhati rūpam asya*, the form of That stands not in the ken of sight. Mind and speech are not permitted to lead us to it, *na vāg gachhcti na mano*. Even the metaphysical logic of Shankara stops short of that final vistory. *Naiṣā tarkeṇa matir apaneyā*, this realisation in thought is not to be obtained by logic. All these various disabilities are due to one compelling cause; they are, because Sat, the truth of existence, Brahman, the reality of things which fills and supports their idea and form, is beyond the recognisable and analysable elements of idea and form. *Aṇor aṇīyān atarkyaṁ anupramāṇāt*. It is subtler even than elemental subtility and therefore not to be deduced, induced, inferred or discovered by a reasoning which proceeds from a consideration of the elements of name and form and makes that its standard. This is a truth which even the greatest philosophers, Vedantic or un-Vedantic, are apt to forget; but the Sruti insists on it always.

Nevertheless mankind has for some thousands of years been attempting obstinately and with passion to discover that Truth by the very means which the Sruti has forbidden. Such error is natural and inevitable to the human consciousness. For the Angel in man is one who has descended out of light and bliss into this darkness, twilight and half-light here, the darkness of matter, the twilight of vital consciousness, the broken half-lights of the mind, and the master impulse of his nature is to yearn passionately towards the light from which he has fallen. Unable to find it at once, too little *dhira* (calm and discerning) to perfect himself patiently, it is natural that he in his eagerness should grasp at other instruments meant for a limited utility and straining them beyond their capacity compel them to serve this his supreme object—which is always to recover the perfect light and by that recovery to recover also what dwells only in the perfect light, —the perfect and unfailing bliss. From this abuse of the parts of knowledge have resulted three illegitimate human activities, of which Philosophy, Religion and Science have severally made themselves guilty, the disputatious metaphysical philosophy of the schools, the theology of the churches and the scientific philosophy of the laboratories. Philosophy, Religion and Science have each their appointed field and dominion; each can help man in his great preoccupation, the attempt to know all that he can about Sat, about Brahman. The business of Philosophy is to arrange logically the

eternal modes of Sat, the business of Religion is to arrange practically and vitally the personal relations of Sat, the business of Science is to arrange observantly and analytically the particular forms and movements of Sat. They are really necessary and ought to become so to each other; and, if they who recognised proper limitations and boundary marks could by their joint activity help man to his present attainable fullness; but by a sort of intellectual land hunger, they are perpetual invaders of each other's dominion, deny each other's positions and therefore remain unprofitably at war through the human ages. Finally, all three after illegitimately occupying each other's fields insist on snatching at a knowledge of which they are all equally incapable,—the essential nature of the world, the secret reality of Sat, the *uttamam rahasyam* of the Brahman. This error, this confusion, this *sankara* or illegitimate mixing of different nature and function is the curse of the Kali and from it arises much, if not most, of the difficulty we experience as a race in escaping from this misery and darkness into bliss and light. It is part and a great part of *Kali kalila*, the chaos of the Kali.

India has always attempted, though not, since the confusion of Buddhism, with any success, if not to keep the three to their proper division of labour—which, with the general growth of ignorance, became impossible—at least, always to maintain or reestablish, if disturbed, some harmony between them. Of this attempt the Gita is the standing monument and the most perfect example. To see the confusion working in its untrammelled force,—and it is only so, by isolating the disease from the modification of curative forces, that we can observe, diagnose and afterwards find its remedy,—we must go to the intellectual history of the European continent. There have been, properly speaking, two critical periods in this history, the Graeco-Roman era of philosophic illumination previous to Christianity and the era of modern scientific illumination which is still unexhausted. In the first we see the revolt of Philosophy (with Science concealed in her protecting embraces) against the usurpation of Religion. We find it, after achieving liberation, in its turn, denying Religion and usurping her sacred prerogative. In the modern era we see Science this time emerged and adult, keeping Philosophy behind her, in revolt against Religion, first liberate herself, then deny Religion and usurp her prerogatives, then, or as part of this final process of conquest, turn, deny and strike down her lofty ally and usurp also her ancient territory. For if Science has scorned and denied Religion, she has equally scorned and denied Metaphysics. If she has declared God to be a barbarous myth, a fiction of dreams and terrors and longings and denied

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us the right of communion with the Infinite, equally has she declared Metaphysics to be an aberration of the ideative faculty, a false extension of logic and denied our right to recognize any metaphysical existence or anything at all which cannot be judged by or inferred from the results of the test tube, the scalpel, the microscope and the telescope. Neither, however, has she herself hesitated to dogmatise about the essential nature of existence and the mutual relations of its general modes, matter, life, mind and spirit. But for our immediate purpose it is only necessary to note the result in either of these eras of these tremendous usurpations. The result of the usurpations of Philosophy was that mankind flung itself with an infinite sincerity, with a passionate sense of relief into the religion of an obscure Jewish sect and consented for a length of time which amazes us to every theological absurdity, even the most monstrous, so that it might once more be permitted to believe in something greater than earth and to have relations with God. The old philosophical spirit was torn to pieces with Hypatia in the blood-stained streets of Alexandria. Theology usurped her place and discoursed blindly and foolishly on transubstantiation and consubstantiality and one knows not what other barren mysteries. So far as philosophy was allowed an independent existence, she was compelled to do not her own work but the work of Science; so we find the schoolmen elaborately determining by logic and à priori word-fencing questions which could only be properly determined by observation and analysis. For Theology, for Mediaeval Religion herself did not care for this field of knowledge; she had no need for scientific truths, just as the Jacobin Republic had no need of chemists; in fact she guillotined Science wherever its presence attracted her attention. But all injustice—and that means at bottom all denial of truth, of the *satyam* and *ritam*—brings about its own punishment or, as Religion would put it, God's visitation and vengeance. Science liberated, given in her strenuous emergence the strength of the Titans, avenges herself today on her old oppressors, on Religion, on Philosophy, breaks their temples, scorns their gods and prophets and seeks to deprive them even of the right to existence. That was the result of the Graeco-Roman illumination. And what will be the result of the scientific illumination, the modern enlightenment, the fiery triumph and ardent intellectual bigotry of the materialist? It is too early to foresee the final denouement, but unformed lines of it show themselves, obscure masses arise. Mysticism is growing obscurely in strength as Science grew obscurely in strength in the Middle Ages. We see titanic and mystic figures striding out of the

East, building themselves fortresses and points of departure, spreading among the half-intellectual, capturing even the intellectual—vague figures of Spiritualism, Mental Science, Psychical Research, Neo-Hinduism, Neo-Buddhism, Neo-Mahomedanism, Neo-Christianity. The priests of Isis, the adepts and illumination of Gnosticism, denied their triumph by the intervention of St. Paul and the Pope, reborn into this latter age, claim now their satisfaction. Already some outworks of materialism are giving way, the attack grows more insistent, the defence more uncertain, less proudly self-confident, though not less angry, contemptuous, bitter and intolerant; the invaders increase their adherents, extend the number of their strongholds. If no wider and higher truth intervenes, it would almost seem as if the old confusion in a new form might replace the new. Perhaps an Esoteric Society or a Spiritualist Circle of High Mediums will in a few centuries be laying down for us what we shall think about this world and the next, what particular relations with Gods will be permitted us, what Influences or Initiates we shall worship. Who knows? The fires of Smithfield may yet reblaze to save heretics from perdition.

These are not mere fantastic speculations. The history of humanity and the peculiar capacities of that apparently incalculable and erratic thing, human nature, ought to warn us of their possibility or at least that they are not entirely impossible, in spite of the printing press, in spite of the clarities of Science. No doubt with so many Schools and Academies, such spread of education, never again would enlightenment be dimmed and the worship of gods and ghosts would in the end amuse none but the vulgar. We must accept these things as possible and examine why they are possible. This reaction is inevitable because Philosophy, though exceedingly high and luminous, tends to be exclusive and narrow and Science, though exceedingly patient, accurate and minute, tends to be limited, dry and purblind. They are both apt to be as dogmatic and intolerant in their own high way or in their own clear, dry way as Religion in her way which is not high but intense, not clear but enthusiastic; and they live on a plane of mentality on which humanity at large does not yet find itself at perfect ease, cannot live without a struggle and a difficulty in breathing. They both demand from man that he shall sacrifice his heart and his imagination to his intellect, shall deny his full human nature and live coldly and dryly. You might just as well ask him to live without free breathing. The mental world in which we are asked to live, resembles what the life of the humanity would be if the warmth of the sun had diminished, the earth were growing chill and its atmosphere

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were already too rarefied for our comfort. It is no use saying that he ought to live in such an atmosphere, that it will improve his mental health and vigour. Perhaps he ought, though I do not think so, but he cannot. Or rather the individual may,—everything is possible to individual man,—but the race cannot. The demand can never be allowed; for it is a denial of Nature, a violation of the great Mother, a displacement of her eternal facts by the aridities of logic; it is a refusal of the Truth of things, of the *Satyam*, *Ritam*, and if it is persisted in, it will bring its own revenges. Philosophy and Science, if they are to help mankind without hurting it and themselves, must recognise that man is a complex being and his nature demands that every part of that complexity shall have its field of activity and every essential aspiration in him must be satisfied. It is his nature and his destiny to be *āptakāma*, satisfied in his desires, in the individual and in the race—though always in accordance with the *satyam*, the *ritam*, which is also the *sukham* and *sundaram*, not lawlessly and according to aberrations and caprices. It was the great virtue of the ancient Hinduism, before Buddhism upset its balance and other aberrations followed, that it recognised in principle at least this fundamental verity, did not deny what God insists upon but strove, it does not matter whether perfectly or imperfectly, to put everything in its place and create a natural harmony.

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SRI AUROBINDO

THE INDETERMINATE OUTLOOK*

IF the Absolute represents the finality, or the ultimate Truth of all things,—that which we are in fact seeking through our advancing knowledge,—then this seeking must needs be guided by a greater understanding and awareness of the manifold Nature of that all-containing Reality. At first however, our finite and limited intellect is overwhelmed by the vastness of this omni-existent Absolute, which elusively escapes one's grasp; and hence the natural reaction is to push aside any consideration of that, at least until one has gathered sufficient evidence and data to approach it confidently. In the meantime we dismiss it summarily by calling it an Unknowable or the Indeterminable,—something to be left aside for the time being. Yet we are always hesitant of making the decisive approach,—perhaps lest we expose too strikingly the vast lacunae in our already established knowledge, which is by no means so secure. It is obvious that the mind of man is reluctant to disturb its fixed orbit of ideas, to face an infinite Reality of which it can only speak in terms of finite determinations,—which are only such fragments of the Whole as it can seize on; or in terms of collective indeterminates, which represent the variable relation between groups of determinate seizable fragments; or perhaps in terms of the infinite Indeterminable itself, meaning the vast Unknowable that appears to be beyond all determination by us. And so our consideration of what should form the strongest basis of our knowledge is pushed further away. This hedging however, from that which to all things is the central Reality, only accentuates the fact that this latter, whose wholeness is veiled from us, merely escapes an inquiry based solely on the intellect.

From our past highest sources of knowledge—such deposits of an ancient Wisdom as have, for example, been intelligibly preserved in India,—two outstanding and time-valued truths have come down to us, which can be confidently taken as the cornerstones of our advancing knowledge. Firstly there is the revelation regarding the Nature of the Absolute as a triple-

* *The Life Divine*, Volume II, Chapter I, pp. 1-4 (2nd Edn.)

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stranded Reality,—that is, (as far as our traditional verbal expression can approximate to it), an infinite Existence, an all-extensive-Consciousness and a pure immaculate Delight of Being. And secondly it has been succinctly revealed that the all-extensive Consciousness of the Divine is above all a dynamic Force—a Consciousness-Force as it is called—which is the true Creator, the divine creative Power of the worlds. Yet we have to face the fact that these supra-physical truths are not only remote-seeming to the reality of the world, but that by all appearances they are even opposed to the actuality of things. This does not mean that this knowledge itself is something abnormal or even alien to man's practical worldly attitude and activity. Rather it indicates the wide gulf that exists between what we regard as normal and what we are bound to concede is a wider and higher (though as yet rare) vision of Reality; and this points to the fact that it is man's present means of knowing that are restricted and limited.

While this insufficiency is of course a deep-rooted difficulty that cannot be so readily overcome, we have to be certain that it is not an impossible undertaking for man to outgrow his present limitation. If, as a deeper analysis of the situation shows, the resistance to a change in our human outlook, is due to a central opposition in man's mental make-up, then at least we should ascertain the nature of the opposition, and the possible means of eliminating it, rather than ignoring the issue completely. In this respect the most practical approach can be made by considering first the real cosmic root and nature of the Unknowing which forms the present texture of our life and outlook. By this means we can discover the true relation between our insufficient sphere of existence and the vaster Reality, which nonetheless we cannot yet reach or demonstrate. Its Realness in fact must be something that has to be grown towards.

From man's present restricted standpoint it is quite understandable (by virtue of the very restrictedness), that the condition of Existence should appear to us in the form of a trenchant duality. On the one side there is the mere glimmer of knowing of which man's consciousness is a leading integer, and on the other the indefinable Vast or the Unknown, apparently shut off from what we know the world to be. Although man's scientific advancement is ever seeking to unravel this Unknown, yet it is always and solely by means of instruments themselves that belong to the Unknowing, and hence he is failing to lay the necessary firm and stable foundation of knowledge,—producing only a shifting indeterminism. Thus at present science is groping through a fog of uncertainties where even his former absolutes and direc-

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tional signs have vanished. It has become clearer that one is faced implacably with a real Ignorance on this side and an ever elusive Knowledge beyond,—and this is how the seeming duality of the world and that which lies beyond has come into being. Yet must we accept this condition of incompleteness as an insurmountable fixture of man's life and outlook, or even as ineradicably inherent in the nature of the world? Even apart from the contrary claims and assurances of the world's seers and spiritually enlightened, it is beginning to be more generally realised as a logical necessity and outcome of the world process, that a real reconciling Truth exists at the heart of things, which is detached from the endless conflicts and oppositions set up in man and projected by him around. Such a Truth clearly belongs to that which stands above man and the world,—which the ancients had discovered as the dynamic creative Power upholding the Cosmos, and which at the same time has entered into all things and maintains therein what we realise to be essentially an integral cosmic harmony and complex inter-related activity.

Man however, constantly pulled by the contraries of error and truth, evil and good, imperfection and perfection, cannot readily realise the simple fact that mind,—his chief instrument of knowing—actually stands at the meeting-place of these contraries. This is not to say that these latter are the creations of mind, but that man himself is at the juncture of two great opposites—the Ignorance and the Knowledge, which we have already observed; and hence it is man's real task to reconcile them without denying the existence of one or the other. If this were not the case, man would be aware only of one state of existence undisturbed by the intrusion of anything alien or conflicting in his life and ideas. He would be as content, for example, as the animal world out of which he has emerged. In fact the more man advances in knowledge the more he becomes aware of the larger field of Ignorance in which he lives, and of the vast stretches of Knowledge he has yet to bring into the actuality of the world. Of all earthly creatures man is the one discontented being, who is conscious of his own incompleteness, and is ever spurred on by that awareness to fulfil a greater purpose in life.

This lack of fixity between man's present condition and the greater Reality of which he is indubitably a part, but from which he is undoubtedly separated, only corroborates the fact that man himself is not a static being. He is even as science reminds us, the growing-point of an evolutionary branching that connects him inseparably with the animal and the plant worlds. Can it be then that this apparently blind sprawling mass of life that we call evolution, really has an aim, as we are implying, and that it is urging man—either

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in spite of or in co-operation with the fact that he is himself endowed with a free-will—towards a higher status of being? This certainly presupposes a higher guiding Consciousness beyond man's, but of which our sense-bound awareness gives no direct evidence. And this introduces the crucial question whether man really accepts a transcendent Will above his own self-will as the guiding Power of his evolutionary progression. At the same time there is the counteracting condition of the world which offers us no support for the belief in a progressive evolution, though there is no logical scientific reason to suppose that the movement of evolution has ceased to make progress,—unless we put our own time-scale into Nature's and call the present retrograde condition of man's world an indication that Nature has finished or abandoned her work. A more feasible explanation is that the present condition might even be a forceful indication that Nature is surpassing man, especially if he chooses not to keep in step with a higher Law and direction to which Nature herself is subject. Obviously the failure to see a transcendent Purpose in evolution is the result of our own superficial and self-centred seeing of the situation. For even as science probes deeper into Nature, it is revealing a more co-ordinate and inter-related pattern therein, which seems to represent a dynamic cumulative process that continually and progressively builds up more and more complex aggregates of life or higher forms of being.

Let us then rather admit the gaps in our own state of knowledge, and try to see first the condition of things as they exist in themselves. At this stage of our scientific endeavour it has become clear that we encounter at least three principal separate laws in Nature's working, which have to be taken into account. Firstly there is the law of the material atom itself, secondly the law of life in its inter-action with matter, and thirdly the law of mind, of which the phenomenal appearance of these inter-acting processes as seized upon by our own mental consciousness, is a significant part. When we regard the outer world purely from the material angle we see mainly a mechanical determinism therein, where a rigid inertia or cohesion of substance represents the central fact of persistence that is inherent in matter. Regarded purely from the vitalistic level, on the other hand, the phenomenal world begins to reveal a cumulative drive or pressure, through a widely devious but nevertheless directed movement, instigated by an insatiable urge for change—as though the whole process of Nature is being driven towards some secret goal of which it is itself unaware. Finally from the mental, or more precisely the vitalistic mental viewpoint, the element of chance or of infinite possi-

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bilities—a random freedom that appears to be outside the individual's control—comes more dominantly into man's picture of the world, in consequence of the increasing interplay of mind with life. As it has turned out this innate freedom of mind has become narrowed into an individualised free will, which though an asset if rightly directed, has for the most part become a disconcerting interference in man's search for Truth, in that it has predominantly imposed its own self-centred law even in face of other natural laws that should all act co-ordinately. In our observations of Nature's working therefore, it is essential that the three basic actions of matter, life and mind, which form the interwoven structure of the world, must be seen both separately and in their intimate interrelation, if we are to comprehend the Whole and the interconnection of its parts. This means that we have to see clearly the working and purposive aim of the principal strands of the whole complexity,—the laws of matter, life and mind with, at the same time, the co-ordinating Truth that stands behind them. This can only be achieved when we disentangle our own superficial seeing from the constant flux of Nature in which we are ordinarily too greatly immersed to see anything beyond; and this means standing back from the process in order to obtain the necessary detachment and clarity of discernment. This again can only be done effectively when we have discovered a wider consciousness (that is not part of, rather unattached from, the triple mesh of Nature's outer functioning), which is already present though latent as the soul-being, which can open us to the wideness of its own higher source and origin above. The law of this inner consciousness, unlike the intellect, is that of a direct knowing by identity, a comprehensive seeing that combines detachment with a penetrative insight. It is essentially a seeing of existence itself, as the experience of one's own existence.

Through this new orientation and intimate identity we not only come to realise that a greater Consciousness exists behind Nature, but that this is also the true creative Force that guides, directs and sustains the whole cosmic movement,—and forms in fact what we can only call the divine creative Consciousness. Even the simple admission of the presence of the divine Consciousness active in and behind the world, opens us to a wider realm and domain beyond the narrow shut-in aperture of our ordinary perception of things. Our perspective and standpoint are thus completely changed. No longer are we tied helplessly and rigidly to a fixed centre with a limited range of perception, but gain a new manifold awareness. Yet the mind itself, accustomed to the closed and narrow half-lit vision of its normal

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outlook, finds it difficult to accept this change of consciousness. The darkened mind shrinks from the Light which it sees as wholly alien to the present nature of things, and hence concludes that a new consciousness cannot belong to the terrestrial order of life. But if we analyse this resistance more carefully we find that it is man's dominating ego—the narrowed 'I'-consciousness of his being—that really resents the change. This resistance becomes the more acute when the very dominance of the ego in man's being is threatened by the influx of a wider consciousness to which it naturally refuses to submit its power. And this is the case at the present critical juncture when a new Consciousness—that of the growing psychic or soul-being in man—is struggling to emerge and manifest itself. This psychic element, as the direct seed of the Divine Bliss and Nature, is a separate entity from mind, but at present its influence in us is excluded from the outer acting part of our being by the narrow mental centre or ego. Thus our ordinary mental outlook disregards its presence completely, and it is only rarely that the true psychic influence and penetrative light can obtrude into the surface consciousness. When this happens however, we feel the calm and the wideness and the secret joy that belongs to a Consciousness beyond our petty narrowness of outlook. It reveals the secret connection with the Divine Consciousness; but naturally the ego-dominated mind, being reluctant to admit this inner relation of which it is not a direct participant,—since it holds itself apart from it—makes the soul appear an alien entity.

This state of affairs, which dominates all our outer activity, the ego stubbornly upholds. But there is a larger more expansive part of mind that is ordinarily closed to us, but which is yet free of the domination of the ego. This is the higher mind which, though itself not the true spiritual sphere, is yet open directly to reflect the truth and luminosity of the spiritual Reality itself. It is by our progressive opening to this higher and infinitely wider zone of mind that we can break down the restriction of the ego-hold over us—both in the individual and in the collectivity—and so release the psychic element in humanity, which unbound can grow naturally and freely towards the divine Truth. By this approach we are able to develop the needed universal and global outlook, by a natural process, a growing from within outwards, which is in direct alignment with the whole development and unfolding of Nature. We should thus become possessed by a consciousness that is able to identify itself more directly and naturally with the Divine Consciousness, which embraces and enters all things and which the immature psychic being in us is striving to bring into our active awareness and nature. For

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the central aim of the earth's evolution is, as Sri Aurobindo sees it, to bring forth that new principle which man realises inwardly as soul, and transcendently as the Light and Bliss, the Truth and the Perfection, thus preparing the way for the actualisation of man's ancient ideal of a divine Life and order in the world. But these terms and concepts are as yet vague to us, and need to be clarified by a wider Knowledge and a clearer discernment into the Reality of the spiritual Truth and its dynamic Nature.

At first however, we have to face the fact that immediately we begin to approach the subject of spirituality we become aware of a trenchant duality, bearing with it an incessant train of contraries and oppositions which we cannot reconcile with the Perfection of the higher Reality. This is due to an incapacity which we have already recognised to reside in the active and fundamental nature of mind; and because mind is our chief instrument of knowing this direct influence in us is all the more accentuated. Thus we have to recognise the fact that these reactions of mind give no indication of the validity of the higher truths, rather they expose the need to train the mind by widening and heightening its range. And this cannot be achieved, as psychoanalysts claim, merely by excavating the deposits of mind's past stumbling growth out of the animal subconscious nature in a mis-directed search for the inner soul. Rather it is by exploring the higher elevated zones which man can already reach, that we can truly lay bare the possibilities of man's advancement and higher growth. The cosmic truths that were spoken of at the beginning of this essay—those pertaining to the Nature of the Absolute and its divine creative Power—are two fundamental revelations that have come down to us purely through the opening of mind to its higher light-suffused plane. It is on such truths, which have already stood the tests of time and experience, that a more secure ground, a firmer and more productive basis even, can be laid for a higher and wider elevation of Knowledge that extends into the vast uncharted realms of the spiritual Reality.

N. PEARSON

THE TOUCH UPON THE CENTRE

A GREAT deal of the enlightened thought of the modern age has been for some time preoccupied with the ideal of the integration of human personality. The discovery of complexes, schizophrenia, the concept of the gestalt etc. in modern psychology is part of an insistent process towards the coordination and integration of the different parts of man and the forging of them into a harmonious and dynamic unity. Much of the evil of life, much of the rankling bitterness of differences and discords, much of the wastage of human energy, the warping of human faculties and the wreckage of noble hopes and ideals is, indeed, due to a conflict of the members in the human being. Light and darkness, truth and falsehood, good and evil, the impulse of giving and the impulse of grabbing, all sway in a shifting balance in the psychological make-up of almost every man. The saint is hidden in the sinner and peeps out of him sometimes, as a ray of light glimmers out of a sombre cloud; and the sinner frets or drowns in the saint and surprises him by his sudden sallies. This conflict of the members must be resolved, if man aspires to become a harmonious whole, a homogenous entity, unified in his being and organically manifold in his self-expression.

This urge towards integration of personality derives from the overmastering urge towards general unity. Paradoxically, man desires nothing so insistently today as unity, though he advances towards it through an accentuation of divisions and discords,—blindly, fumblingly, but undoubtedly under an irresistible impulsion. Those who are not attached to any particular aspect of the modern life, or wedded to any of the current ideologies or patterns of action, cannot fail to be struck by the almost desperate attempts at unity made by every civilised people on the face of the globe. But the more mankind is pressing towards unity, the more it is bumping against the divisions and discords that keep multiplying upon its way. Are not these dissonances and disharmonies a prophetic prelude to the unity and harmony preparing behind the veil—a last, lurid flare-up before the final extinction?

But before there can be unity in men, there must be unity in man. The

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individual must lead and blaze a trail for the collectivity. The inner individual integration must precede the general outer unification. The war and mutiny in the members of the individual must first give place to a concord and a concerted functioning. And once this unity is achieved, be it only in a few individuals, it will naturally reproduce itself in others, as all individual conquests and achievements tend to reproduce themselves in the collectivity. But so long as the inner conflict continues in man, it will be impossible to resolve the outer conflicts,—the anarchic forces of hate and rancour and violence and lusts of all kinds will persist in tearing down the structure of human society and destroying all that is great and noble in its culture and civilisation. It is, indeed, preposterous to strive for an outer unity and harmony without first caring to eliminate the inner forces that create discord and disharmony; and the futility of such an ignorant endeavour has never been so evident as today.

How can one integrate one's personality? Modern psychology has been grappling with the problem for sometime past, but without any very appreciable result. The experiments and hypotheses of Jung come sometimes very near touching the skirts of a solution, and then stray and drift away, as if lost in a fog of intellectual preconceptions and misgivings.

The solution of the problem lies in the discovery of the central being of man. It is not enough to know the parts of his nature; we have to know that to which the parts belong and in which they cohere. If man is not a mere aggregate of disparate parts, rolling along in a current of chances and necessities, there must be in him a living centre or nucleus which not only sustains and holds together the different members, but develops and guides them towards a definite end. That centre is not a mere element among other drifting elements, but the master of its instrumental organism. It is a conscious being, a soul, which prepares from behind and perfects its means of self-expression, its executive nature. It is the indestructible essence of man and carries in it an essential significance; while its nature of mind, life and body has only an instrumental or expressional value and utility. The failure to distinguish between this essential being of man and his expressional nature is responsible for the barrenness of modern philosophy and its pitiful incompetence to throw any effective light upon man's path of evolution. Modern philosophy limits itself to the expressional and fugitive parts of man, and denies or ignores the essential. Modern psychology too does not distinguish between the essential and the expressional parts of man, and that is why, in spite of its admirable researches and some quite

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remarkable discoveries, it has failed to reach the kernel of man's personality and seize the secret of its integration. For the most part, it busies itself with the superficial movements of human nature, and even when it dives into its ulterior motives and hidden springs, it does not dive deep enough to touch the elemental energies and the basic structure;—its limitations preclude its diving so deep. And the heights of the consciousness of man are, of course, far beyond its ken. Besides, not commanding a synthetic view of the whole being and nature of man, and being ignorant of its very centre, creative, coordinating and controlling, it gropes about from theory to theory, from hypotheses to hypotheses in the pride of its overweening empiricism, only to be beaten and baffled at every step by the elusive complexity and intricate working of its subject.

It would not have been so, if modern philosophy and psychology had not turned their backs upon the spiritual heritage of the Western culture. Philosophy in the West has, indeed, broken away from the spiritual and religious traditions of the past, from the deepest teachings of Pythagorus and Plato and Plotinus, and remodelled itself upon the modern materialistic science. It is just the reverse of the ancient method in which science received its inspiration from philosophy and conducted its experiments in the light of an assured knowledge; and philosophy followed in the wake of spiritual experience,—intuition leading the inquiries of the physical mind as well as the speculations of the intellect. Psychology, which was regarded as a branch of philosophy and carried on its investigations of the human mind upon the basis of certain essential truths of God and man and Nature, was comprehensive in its outlook, synthetic in its methods and sure of its steps;—there was always a solid core of authentic knowledge to draw upon, a body of verified truths acting as an effective check upon the vagaries and fickle curiosities of the mind. The doubts and denials of the physical mind were not allowed to masquerade as the dictates of reason and repel the promptings of intuition. But the physical mind being in the ascendant in man today and his inner perceptions dimmed and discouraged, philosophy, psychology, art, poetry, all are reduced to browsing in the rank fields of Matter and creating out of the dubious data of the senses and the turbid thoughts of a mind enthralled by the fugitive things of life. So long as this infatuation with the central being of man cannot be discovered, and the integration of his personality will remain an unrealised ideal.

It is, therefore, indispensable for the integration of the personality of man that his central being or soul be discovered and brought forward to be the

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overt guide of his evolving nature. When that is done, a harmonious development of his whole being will become as natural a process as the blossoming of flowers or the rhythmic dance of the stars. All the conflicts of his members, progressively resolved, will culminate in a sweet and happy concord spontaneously expressing itself in the outer conduct of his life. It is such a concord, inner and outer, that can be the base of peace, an active and creative peace, in the multiple relations of life. A perfect concord by the integration of the members of the human personality will be a triumphant revelation of the soul in the conditions of material existence. But the soul cannot be realised and revealed by the unaided power of the human mind. The human mind, by the sincerity of its aspiration and surrender, can effect an opening in the consciousness, somewhat loosen the knots of the separative ego, impose a preliminary discipline and control upon the warring members, and thus prepare the being for the reception of Grace, but it is Grace alone that can touch the soul into a perfect efflorescence. It is a mysterious or mystic process, in as much as it passes the limited comprehension of the human mind; but it is none the less real for it, and tangible in its results. There can be a reflection of the freedom, purity and peace of the soul in the serene and purified intelligence of man, but a reflection is not the reality, it cannot give the living and abiding sense of infinite freedom and immortality that the latter carries in it. The opening of the bud of the soul requires not only a purification and preparation of the unregenerate human being, but a touch or pressure from within or above, a hatching, as it were, which is a supernatural action of an inscrutable and incalculable potency. In some exceptional cases, this touch falls upon the soul directly, and not through any human intermediary or Guru, as in the case of Buddha or Christ or Sri Ramkrishna; but in all other cases, the divine Grace acts through a Guru who has realised some kind of union with the Infinite. It is true that the power of Grace is intrinsically infinite and infallible, but in its transmission, it is conditioned by two things: the nature and consciousness of the intermediary or Guru, and the opening and receptivity of the disciple. The limitations of the former can, however, be surmounted by the absolute sincerity and unstinted surrender of the disciple, which make the divine Grace lean down and directly take up the charge of his spiritual life. But when Grace incarnates itself in a human form and mediates between the Divine and the human being, there can be no end to the disciple's possibilities of realisation. The Avatara represents one of the highest peaks of spiritual attainment in the evolving conditions of the material life, and acts at once as a beacon and a pioneer in the world.

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When the touch of the human embodiment of Grace falls upon the soul of the disciple, there is a general blossoming of his whole being and a quickening of all its faculties, and not a mere tension towards the peace and silence of the Immutable. The function of the soul is "to work on each plane so as to help each to awaken to the true truth and the Divine Reality".¹ "It is a portion of the Divine Mother passing through the experiences of the Ignorance in order to arrive at the truth of its being and be the instrument of a Divine Manifestation and work here."² Personal salvation is not the exclusive preoccupation of the soul, but of the human mind, wearied of the world and pining for the freedom and peace of the Beyond. The soul or the psychic being, touched into a full awakening, turns and surrenders the whole being to the Divine with love and devotion, so that it may be purified and transformed, and converted into a revealing channel of the divine glory. The central awakening precedes and infallibly prepares the general awakening and transfiguration. The movement is so natural, so spontaneous, so inevitable, that it does away with the necessity of all strenuous labour or tapasya, unless, of course, there is a part that resists the change and clings to its own obscurity. Every arduous tapasya or ascetic self-repression indicates an obstinate resistance somewhere in the being, and, though necessary, is not a pure psychic movement. The sunlit path is the path of the psychic, which starts from the centre of the human being and winds along through the different members, integrating and unifying them in a single aspiration for the Divine. The sunlit path is the path, not of extinction, but of an integral fulfilment. The touch of Grace upon the centre of man's being produces a vernal splendour of divine perfection.

It is this touch upon the centre that is the secret of the Mother's work of transformation. It is the touch of embodied Grace, of divine and dynamic Love; and it falls direct upon the soul, making it break into a multi-petalled beauty through its instrumental nature of mind, life and body. In her Prayer of March 31, 1917, the Mother implored the Supreme to grant her the power to make the heart of man leap at the touch of "Thy divine breath." In fact, this had been her constant prayer to the Supreme.

"Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and un hoped-for

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. IV.

² *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. IV.

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joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath."

"Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime Presence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true Paradise?"

This touch of Love works in an unpredictable way. It does not follow any set method of purification or adopt a moral and rational means of edification. Often it seems to take no notice of the gravest defects of a nature, but concentrates rather upon the strongest and most evolved parts of it. Those parts then begin to blossom; bright and vibrant energies enter into them; a new poise and harmony settle in them and spread to the other parts. The light that radiates from the centre exposes the obscurities and ugliness of the parts that are still unregenerate—the twists and seams and sores show in all their hideousness. It is not by chastisement, and penalties, but by a quiet and steady exposure to Light that the purification proceeds and the perverted energies are won over to the side of the Divine. But sometimes it is the reverse way: the touch falls painfully upon the parts that rebel and resist,—it is the touch of purifying fire; the flaming wrath of the Mother, the red glare of Mahakali, burns up the refractory elements. Grace thus wears its double aspect of compassionate benignancy and fierce and destructive violence in its dealings with the hard knots and complexes of human nature. But it starts its operations with the soul and acts in the light of an all-seeing knowledge. Because its eye is at once on all needs of the being, it is both indulgent and exacting, deliberate and drastic, and specific and general in its action. Its stress is always upon an unhampered flowering of the *svabhava* or self-nature of the central being of man.

That appearances are extremely deceptive and that the Mother's love does not care in the least for appearances, is proved abundantly in the life of the Ashram. It so happens sometimes that a man comes and prays for admission. To all appearance, he is a rather ragged specimen of humanity. Will he be able to do this difficult Yoga?—one wonders. He seems to have no capacity whatsoever. In the outside world, he would have been condemned to passing his frustrated life as an object of pity and contempt. It would have been, indeed, a hard life for him there,—without hope and without

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effort. But the Mother accepts him, even while perhaps she refuses admission to many others apparently much more deserving than he. She accepts him and her Love touches his being, and lo and behold! a new life wells up in him, an unwonted spirit of self-offering and devoted service of the Divine inspires his whole being, and a new horizon opens up before his mind's eye. Where there was darkness before and despair, and a crippling sense of incapacity, light begins to dawn and an unknown strength fills his members. Along with a firm will, new faculties develop in him; and if a person watches him, he will be amazed to find that he has not only proved promising and useful, but even begun to show a certain talent in one or more directions. In a few years he is a changed man with a changed consciousness; a renovated being glowing with hope and ardour and aspiration, and advancing with confident steps towards his inevitable destiny of a divine fulfilment. Not that his path has all been a bed of roses. He has had struggles and brief but perhaps acute periods of gloom and agony, —stretches of dreary desert to cross in the night; but he has always felt a Presence enveloping him and a strong, kindly Hand leading him. The Mother's Love is now his only support and sustenance, and her smile kindles the sun even in the midst of his being's midnight. With her as his guide, a creature of time has become a pilgrim of eternity.*

This is the miracle of the Mother's touch upon the centre of our being, —the touch which is the secret of the integration of our personality and the only means of a harmonious perfection and fulfilment of our life.

RISHABHCHAND

* There have been many cases like this, which afford an interesting psychological study from the standpoint of the integration of human personality.

IS IT ECLECTICISM?

(2)

UNDER the caption "Sri Kapali Sastry on Sri Aurobindo" a reply to my article "Is it Eclecticism?" that appeared in the *Advent* of last August is given by the same critic Sri S. S. Raghavachar in the *Vedanta Kesari* (January). The writer makes a serious attempt to maintain the position he first took up, amplifies his criticism and in his reconsideration of whatever flowed from his pen he has tried to remove the 'ambiguity' I had referred to by stating that his critical remarks proceed from his dissatisfaction with the work of the disciple and not with the *Magnum Opus* of the Master himself. I welcome this concession contained in the last part of the sentence, as *The Life Divine* is an admirable production which even the worst opponents of Sri Aurobindo's teachings dare not dispose of lightly even when they could not or would not appreciate it *in toto*. But this does not mean that the critic accepts the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, the Yoga, the Path, the Goal of mankind, and other kindred matters on which he has written many volumes which put together are all very much larger in bulk than that of the *Magnum Opus*. His admiration for *The Life Divine* is not in question, but he has stated it because he wants it to be known that he does not find fault with that work and nothing more. If he has dissatisfaction with the disciple's work, he has his own reasons which he has stated in categorical terms. To mention them and to give adequate answers would require as much space as, if not more than double the space, taken up for writing the 'booklet' that has so much offended his (critic's) philosophical sobriety as to unsettle his equable poise in the 'fabrication' of the Daniel's judgment. If I refrain from taking notice of his posers, I have reasons which I shall presently state. I shall later on deal with some of his statements regarding the Master's philosophy and the many schools of philosophy in the West or in India.

The first and foremost reason for my viewing the criticism as not meriting refutation is this: I have stated in the book animadverted upon as well as in my article in the *Advent* the exact nature and purpose of the work viz. to

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explain throwing light on the Fundamental Concepts of Sri Aurobindo's Teachings. The title of the 'booklet' itself must make it evident to any one who is not unwilling to see. Now to extend the connotation of the title to a title that would suit the convenience of the critic to attack viz. 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo' is unfair, baseless; and that even after my explaining the position to insist that somehow the folly was mine, at any rate I should or must fall into the error of the critic's choice, is invincible prejudice; if not, what else?

Again, the critic himself states "It is too slender to be taken as furnishing an adequate introduction to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo". For this reason also, *Lights on the Fundamentals* is not the same as an adequate introduction to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. There is another important point that the critic has thoroughly missed. He seems to assume that this 'booklet' purports to be a summary or resume of *The Life Divine* which is not the case. Nowhere have I stated in the book itself or later in my article that it is an introduction to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as presented in *The Life Divine*. I took care to explain 'darśanebhyah' in the plural (p. 90). On the previous page it will be found that this work is 'extract from the teachings of Sri Aurobindo' (p. 89). By that I meant other works also including the *Secret of the Veda*. If I did not mention the authority from Sri Aurobindo's works for every statement I made it was not necessary as mine is the responsibility for whatever I stated. This is because I had a system formed long ago in my mind that could be based on the traditional wisdom of the ancient mystics from the Rig Vedic times traversing the scriptures of an earlier age, followed by the Upanishads and Agamas of the different sects, and Puranas down to our own times. The formation of such a system in my mind was facilitated by Sri Aurobindo's references to the Vedic, Vedantic and Tantric teachings in the various contexts of the subjects he was dealing with. Since the short treatise was intended to expound the central concepts, it was considered advisable to publish it as an appendix to '*The Four Powers of the Mother*', translated by me into Sanskrit verse. As *The Mother* was mainly intended for Sadhaks and the matter was what related to Sadhana, a clear idea of the fundamental concepts of the Master's teachings being found in the booklet, the Master approved my idea of printing it as an appendix. This fact I had already mentioned. At least now, I hope the critic will see the correctness of my view and his initial error which led him to supplement the title by adding his words to explain what he considers I should have meant. Questionable is the journalistic ethics for a reviewer to indulge in

such luxuries. Ancient standard was fairly high and scrupulously maintained by shastraic writers. Old Kumarila demurs to such steps, saying, *yāvad vacanam vācanikam*, 'the meaning actually expressed must be conveyed' and nothing is needed to supplement it.

I might as well stop here having pointed out the erroneous basis of the critic's contention as well as what he calls the main charge that I have not dealt with Sadhana. What I have stated is enough to show that he goes to a wrong shop, knocks and knocks at the wrong door and not finding what he wants quarrels and raises hue and cry instead of blaming himself for want of circumspection before undertaking the unedifying job.

But I proceed to make some observations on some of his statements about the 'eclectic patches', 'Western philosophers' and a few others. What I write here is not quite adequate but is sufficient to point to the direction of my views on the curious and mistaken notions of the critic in respect of some of these topics. Before proceeding I must first dispose of a simple question which shall not be left in suspense. I recognise as genuine the critic's admission that he is not dissatisfied with the Philosophy of *The Life Divine*. I assume therefore that he recognises the synthetic harmony therein as an outstanding fact and that only in my miniature reproduction of it (i.e. *Life Divine*, according to him which I have explained in my denial) it turns out to be an untenable combination of "eclectic patches". Well, it is something to know that he has nothing to say against *The Life Divine*, though he does not expressly state that he accepts the position of man and the goal before him as portrayed in *The Life Divine*; he has conceded so far, and that indeed serves his purpose of tearing to pieces my 'eclectic patches' over which he has very much to quarrel. But one can very easily see that the eclectic bugbear of the critic threatens the teachings of Sri Aurobindo as a whole and as represented in the booklet in question. For whatever scriptural authority was referred to by me whether Veda or Agama, Upanishad or Purana, has been based upon the Master's explicit and lucid statement to the same effect. I stress this fact because the critic strikes at the root of the case I have presented, as an easy step to show that there is no theological tradition to support the seven worlds etc. I shall presently show how the critic has fallen into the error of what seems to him as eclectic. Let me first quote Sri Aurobindo in regard to the world-order: in the *Doctrine of the Mystics* prefaced to the Translation of the Hymns of the Atris, he says: "We have the same Cosmic gradation as in the Puranas but they are differently grouped,—seven worlds in principle, five in practice, three in their

general groupings" (*Arya*, Vol. II, p. 100). I need not quote in detail the descriptive statements made about them and the intricate world-system of the Vedic mystics which takes a gross shape in a simplified form in the Puranas, and has received adequate treatment in the hands of Sri Aurobindo there, as also elsewhere. But the critic would divine "eclectic patches" of the Vedic, Upanishadic and Puranic patterns in the harmonising of the sevenfold, fivefold and threefold principles and groupings and if the terms used are explained, as for instance, *viññāna*, or *Janaloka*, with an eagle's eye, he would pounce upon it tearing it to pieces labelling them as fanciful interpretations without any basis in what he would call 'Theological Tradition'. I realise and readily concede that the critic writes from genuine conviction and long-held strong views on the matter of theological conceptions that are in vogue in certain quarters, but not universal. But I hold that these views have an erroneous basis and the conviction is one born of equally erroneous notions.

In India the Veda is admitted on all hands to be the fountainhead of all spiritual Wisdom; and the other scriptures, Upanishads, Tantra or Purana are not unconnected departures from it, but are 'in their essential build and character transmutations and extensions of the original vision and first spiritual experience'. What Sri Aurobindo writes on the real character of these ancient texts stresses the fact that "the Veda gave us the first types and figures as seen and formed by an imaged spiritual intuition and psychological and religious experience. The Veda became to the later scholastic and ritualistic idea of Indian priests and pundits nothing better than a book of mythology and sacrificial ceremonies." This is so in the face of the fact that all the scriptural texts, Upanishads and others proclaim the Vedas as the supreme authority held in great reverence and even Puranas themselves acclaim in portions that they are enlargings, *upabṛhmaṇam*, upon the Vedic truths.

Once we grasp this fact about the character of these different lines of development of sacred literature in India we no longer accept the idea that they are all unconnected departures from the original source in the Vedic texts.

If therefore the seven worlds of the Puranas are traced to the seven Cosmic principles of the Vedic mystics, we are giving a factual interpretation on the authority of the Vedic and Puranic texts themselves. The same applies to certain references I made to the Taittiriya text which also continues the Vedic tradition and uses a language that is in accord with that of its age. Only when we treat these texts as totally unconnected deviations,

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the 'patches' has room to rear its head. One important fact that must be borne in mind in this context is that the names used in the Purana signifying the nature of the worlds to which they apply are suggestive and are our main clues to unveil the secret; for instance, when the Puranas say that Narayana reposes on Ananta I would presume that Ananta is the Infinite Prakriti on which he rests, and if a learned critic for the sake of criticism questions me as to the propriety of giving that fanciful meaning while according to his theological and puranic tradition Ananta is Sesha, 'serpent, the thousand-headed hydra and nothing more, I have no answer but a pitiful look at the stalwart. In the same way *Jana* in *Janaloka* suggests birth or creation which proceeds from Ananda according to the plain texts of the Upanishad.

Now I shall pass on to another interesting argument of Sri Raghavachar against the idea that Tapas is the creative force, or conscious force and that it leads to anthropomorphism. I stand aghast, my readers would laugh out in disgust. I need not quote him in full, nor is it worth an answer on his terms; I can very well imagine he is not a scoffer of the scriptures, but here he uses whatever argument he can summon to his convenience for demolishing my statements. The pity of it is that he forgets for the time being that the Vedas proclaim that by Tapas, He, Prajapati, created, *sa tapo'tapyata*. The idea occurs frequently in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo expounds the principle of Tapas-force as exclusive concentration, in his *Magnum Opus* over which the critic has no quarrel. In my *Rig Bhashya Bhumika*, published last year, I explained the term occurring in the second verse which I reproduce here as it contains a short but straight answer, as if in anticipation of Sri Raghavachar's criticism. The Supreme "wears the sound-form for body and creates the universe by exhalation and lives with tapas for his life-breath." On this my note runs as follows (I give only the relevant lines): "As the Creator he assumes the form of the primordial Sound, *nāda*, the creative Logos; this Sabda is his body; his life-breath is Tapas which is Consciousness as Force. To show that the Tapas (as explained) is inherent in him an *anthropomorphic* figure is pressed into service on the strength of scriptural authority, that he exhales and the worlds are created. Creation is the natural, effortless outcome of that poise of the Lord, Prabhu."

Sublime ideas, truths that transcend the senses and the reason founded on sense-data have always been expressed in images and figures and symbols from immemorial times, not only in the ancient scriptures of this land, but

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by Mystics all over the world. Only the 'rationalist' raises an ineffective objection against the use of images etc. But the one solid reply that can be given to it is Sri Aurobindo's answer (*Vide* his Letters, First Series) to Leonard Woolf's criticism of Mysticism where in the concluding passages he says that there is no deceitful cunning in using metaphors and symbols as in the simile of focus which is surely not intended as an argument but as a suggestive image.

In modern times thinkers of first rank, even when their system is not labelled spiritual philosophy, have had recourse to figures and images to carry home their conceptions or subtle perceptions, if you like. An appreciative critic of Bergson remarks: "He is occasionally obscure by the squandered wealth of his imagery, his analogies and his illustrations; he has an almost semitic passion for metaphor." Thus, though Sri Aurobindo employs figures and images in illustrative terms to explain what is meant by Tapas and Ananda, he has taken care to deliberate upon them in the language of metaphysical reasoning in his *Magnum Opus*, and for the sake of a clear grasp of the terms he has described that "Tapas is the energising conscious power of Cosmic being by which the world is created, maintained and governed; it includes all concepts of force, will, energy, power, everything dynamic and dynamising. Ananda is the essential nature of bliss of the cosmic consciousness and, in activity, its delight of self-creation and self-experience."

Now I shall proceed to an important aspect of the critic's reasoning in caricaturing as untenable eclectic patches what we consider as a synthetic harmony. I have already mentioned the nature of the Upanishads, Tantra, etc. that are subsequent to and continuation of the teachings of the Vedic Wisdom in spite of their variations in form; and they all branch out from the spirit of the original Scripture. If I find in the *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartrihari something about the Logos I recognise that it has its basis in the Rig Veda, in the *nityā vāk*, the Eternal Word, of Rishi Virupa in the 8th Mandala, or another line from the Valakhilya hymns of the Rig Veda, *vageva viśvā bhuvanāni jajñe* leaps to my mind and if my listener has ears he will have no difficulty in admitting the truth that the Logos of Bhartrihari is of Vedic origin. Or I turn to the Upanishads. I recognise the Logos in the Pranava, Akshara, Omkara, Udgitha variously described and explained therein, or when I look into the Pancharatra, Shakti Tantra or Shaiva Agama, I recognise the same Logos in the primal *nāda*, *ādya spanda*. The primordial throb which is the same with slight difference in name—but more expressive of the significance—as the *nityā vāk*, of the Rig Veda or Udgitha of the

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Chhandogya, or Omkara of the Mandukya; well, in the same manner, I can show that the so many 'isms', *vādas*, that hang loosely in the learned mind of the critic as patches without fusing are mostly in their essentials directly traceable to the Upanishads. I carefully omit the Veda here as it is not in vogue for purposes of theological and spiritual discussions, but simply kept in the lumber room though with great respect in theory. But let me state that these *vādas* have for their support the Shruti texts each in its own way for its purpose. But I do not undertake to quote the relevant texts here on which these Acharyas and their *vādas* depend. This much I say here that if I find spiritual monism or *parināma vāda* or any other, I recognise them as rising from the sacred texts. And if any critic comes forward and preaches to me learnedly that what I say is taken from the spiritual monism of Shankara, I have no option but to laugh and pity my preacher just as any one would if he is told that the Gayatri is taught in the Chhandogya. That the Chhandogya refers to Gayatri is a fact, but originally it is in the Rig Veda of which the learned preacher is obviously ignorant. Similarly there is a passage in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad *tat kena kam paśyet*. When I read it I find that the Shruti refers to an unalloyed Monistic Reality that could be experienced; if I say so my critic would say this is the "ism" of Shankara.

Now that I have finished with the eclectic worm, I should like to bring home the exact nature of this 'eclectic' stuff by the illustration of a picture in which various colours and curves figure within the framework on the canvas and any one with eyes on his head could see that it is a picture drawn on a canvas and that the substance and the materials used can be recognised, including the wooden or metallic frame. But a mind which is not inclined to appreciate a coordinated whole can very well say that the green colour is borrowed from the parrot of that garden, the azure from the half-clouded sky, the curve is copied from the distant landscape, the material for frame from the forest etc. In cases of such judgment which resolves a harmonious synthesis into intruding patches, the superior arbiter is a developed conscience and rectitude of the scrutinising eye; more is a matter of opinion of competent minds that court. Again I am speaking of a tree in its entirety—root and branch, fruit and foliage and stem, but my critical friend's mind, riddled as it is with patches of my system, considers each part separately and thinks this is timber in its raw state, that is bark useful for therapy, those are flowers for decoration and so on with the result that their parts, usefulness or different uses cannot be coordinated and so are incongruous elements. Let me quote a passage from Sri Raghavachar in this connection

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which burns to ashes all the fancied 'patches' that are supposed to make up the whole. "One finds in Sastry's work the emergent evolution of S. Alexander, the intuitionism of Bergson, the spiritual monism of Shankara, the Realism of Ramanuja and Madhava, the Brahma Parinamavada of Bhaskara and Kashmir Saivism, the Logos of Bhartrihari, the Sakti concept of Tantra and the 'Lord' of popular Theism." Well, Sri Raghavachar could go on with many more 'isms', for all is grist that comes to his mill and he is too learned, certainly. But the fact must be told that Sastry was singularly unaware of these systems, except perhaps a superficial idea and second-hand information obtained from later writers who knew or from cheap literature; and it was his fortunate ignorance of these 'isms' in their original and pristine purity that enabled him to study and understand the scriptures in their true set-up while he was hardly out of his teens nearly half-a-century ago, and later led him to appreciate and follow Sri Aurobindo on the one hand and on the other hand equipped him for an upright appraisal of the 'isms' of the West (of the East also), not their downright condemnation as is alleged by Sri Raghavachar.

Sri Raghavachar is emphatic, even extravagant, in the use of his sharp tongue when he fancies error in others and is generous in his righteous indignation at my basic remark about western metaphysics in general. His comments and stretchings and strictures, as are quite often the case with him, are offensive and beside the mark. The actual line I used is this: "The *bulk* of metaphysical thinking in the West differs fundamentally from the philosophical systems in India." This is the beginning of the passage that has offended his sense of fairplay and justice to western philosophers and he quotes the names of James, Bergson, Kant, Plato etc. Well, it is amazing how he fails to see that I did not mean or say that the West has not progressed and is not slowly or rapidly giving up materialistic thought realising the limitations of Reason. The names he mentions are, certainly worthy names. James was the son of a Swedenborgian mystic and himself contributed a deal to psychology and of all his works the *Variety of Religious Experience* was an eye-opener to the scientist who till then would not believe in the phenomena of a non-material existence which is in some way connected with the physical world. Bergson was rightly styled the 'David destined to slay the Goliath of Materialism' and his *Creative Evolution* is the first masterpiece of the Century. Much more can be said here. But what do all these prove? Can all this be an answer to the question 'Is there a philosophic tradition in the West as is assumed in this land that a philosophic system

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is an attempt at intellectual presentation of supra-intellectual truths, perceived or experienced by the system-builder'? Sri Raghavachar is loud that mine is a definite error; but he must know I am in good company.

A word about Reason. It has an important place, and is the highest instrument the human mind is endowed with, but it has its limitations. When I was speaking of Sri Aurobindo's system building, I did accord a radical place for experience, for Realisation and added that certain articles of faith, become theories or dogmas, but I did not mean or say that they shall not or can not be put in terms appealing to Reason. Otherwise there would have been no *raison d'être* for *The Life Divine*. I did not undertake to establish the system or reason out the position and in that connection I spoke of what I may call the starting assumptions or dogmas.

I agree that 'there is clearly a need for a criterion to eliminate pseudo-realizations'. Here Reason can take an important part, but how far it can be trusted to solve the difficulty depends upon so many factors some of which pertain to the office and guidance and limitations of Reason itself.

Before putting down the pen for the present, I wish to add that Sri Raghavachar's zealous and loyal reference to *Vedanta Kesari* is understandable but superfluous. I have something very definite to say about the attitude of this esteemed Monthly in this instance, but I refrain from doing so, because of my long-cherished pleasant feeling and regard for the Journal whose noble services to the community are rendered along non-sectarian lines quite in keeping with the great Name that has been the source of inspiration to so many of us—Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

I note Sri Raghavachar's non-violent ventilations about my 'violence' 'discrediting the accuser', 'the unphilosophical temper' etc. I also note that he does not 'accuse me of absolute originality' and also the occasional spicings of cheap satire which I welcome and appreciate coming as they do from a serious-minded innocent accused.

I trust Sri Raghavachar with his fund of humour would take it all as an instance of 'A Roland for an Oliver'. Indeed, I intended my article to be in the nature of the ancient saying *yādṛśo yakṣastādṛśo baliḥ*, 'as is the Yaksha, so is the offering.'

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

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(1)

A Life-Sketch of Srimant Pratapseth and a Brief Account of the Advaitic System of Thought. By G. R. Malkani. Rs. 2/8

Many of us had heard of the Indian Institute of Philosophy at Amalner, East Khandesh, but had no definite idea about the object of this Institute and its activities. There are so many universities in India teaching Philosophy, what is the necessity of having a separate Institute for it? Professor Malkani rightly thought that people should know what the Institute stands for and he wrote this book. A Life-Sketch of the founder has made the account full and graphic. It is nothing uncommon for rich men having philanthropic ideas for making the best use of their wealth; some establish schools or colleges, some hospitals, some temples; but that a rich mill-owner should have the idea of founding an Institute for research and study in philosophy seems to be rather strange.

Pratapseth was born in a village, Mohanpura in Jaipur state in Marwar and was adopted as son by Manakshet of Chopda in East Khandesh district of the Bombay Presidency, belonging to the same Agarwal community. He attended a local Marathi school, but did not make much progress. The most important event which influenced all his later life occurred just at this early age. The *munim* Gokulkaka, the manager of his father's estate, desired that this promising young man should acquire some knowledge of music. He was in search of a suitable teacher when some one suggested the name of master Savalram Naik, a poor professional Brahmin, who was out of employment at this time. He was appointed as a teacher of music to young Pratapseth, on a salary of Rs 2/- only per mensem. He started with this musical business, but soon took an opportunity to give the boy a wider and more comprehensive education through Marathi literature. One day he placed a more practical problem before Pratap. Would he like to have the kind of education which would make him a successful man in life, or would he have the kind of education that would have nothing else for its reward

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than the highest happiness? Would he have success in *pravritti* or in *nivritti*? The boy chose the more ambitious ideal, namely *nivritti*. That was the beginning of a form of contact between these two individuals that lasted to the end, and united the two persons, the guru and the disciple, in unbreakable ties of personal attachment. The Guru spoke, and the disciple listened. That became the main occupation of the two. The whole programme of the day centred round these talks, and there was nothing more interesting for the two seekers of truth. After the death of his father Pratap opened a spinning and weaving mill at Amalner; this reduced the contacts, but not the interest of the two persons in each other and in their pet subject. The mill stands to-day as a monument to the resourcefulness of Pratapseth, and the mother of all the charitable institutions that have grown around it. It has contributed to no small extent to the wealth and the business of the town, increased the population, and added to the amenities of the place.

Pratapseth could not stay for long periods at Chopda after the starting of the mill at Amalner. When he was away, he received and wrote letters to Master Savalram in which philosophical questions were raised and answers were received. One auspicious day, Pratapseth and Master Savalram went to spend some quiet hours at Oonavadev, a sacred spot in Satpura mountains about 8 miles from Chopda. It was on this occasion that Master Savalram broached the subject of starting an Institute of Philosophy at Amalner where they could impart their knowledge of the truth to young men of promise, who could be depended upon to make the system of advaitism, as expounded by Sri Sankaracharyya, a living force in Indian thought and religion. Neither of these two persons had much of an education. Master Savalram, who was both the spiritual and the mundane teacher of Pratpseth, knew not a word of English. His knowledge of Sanskrit was neither deep nor thorough. He was not well-versed in any of the other systems of Hindu thought. What knowledge he had was mostly derived from a few Marathi translations. That shows how the Vedantic teaching of Shankara has deeply entered into the Marathi tradition. Different provinces in India have followed different lines. In Karnataka we have the predominance of the Shakti cult, in Tamil Nadu Vaishnavism, in Bengal a combination these two. The time has now come to gather all these streams into a mighty Ganges of spirituality that will redeem not only India but the whole of humanity. The founders of the Institute at Amalner seem to have had some such grand ideal in the back of their minds, but they had not the intellectual and spiritual equipment to accomplish it. But Master Savalram had a per-

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sonal magnetism which could powerfully influence certain persons within a limited circle. One of them was Pratapseth and another is evidently the author of the book under review. The latter writes: "Master Savalram and Pratapseth were bent upon this mission. They wanted to make others see what they thought they saw; and they were fully confident that once a person saw what they saw, he would be a new man, a converted man. His learning would be automatically yoked to a new purpose, and to a further refining of his understanding." This is what has actually happened to our author. He came to the Institute as one of the batch of first fellows. He was afterwards sent to England to get a degree in Philosophy so that the Institute in his charge might rise in status and prestige. He has now yoked all his scholarship and intelligence to the purpose of propounding Shankara's Advaita. The Institute came into existence in 1916.

It must be said to the credit of Professor Malkani that he has strictly followed in the footsteps of the great Acharya. He admits that reason cannot give us knowledge of Reality. He says: "The sensible objects are *given* through a form of intuition, and reason elaborates our knowledge *about* them. But what is not so given is a closed book to reason, and reason has no natural function with regard to it." "Evidently, in the absence of any natural means, such as perception or inference, we can only fall back upon, and have recourse to a supernatural means. That is *śruti* or revelation." "But *Sruti* is not enough. We must use reason to interpret *sruti*-texts themselves to determine the right meaning." But if reason has no natural function with regard to Reality how can it be relied on to give a right interpretation of the *Sruti*? Indeed it is this fundamental self-contradiction which vitiates Shankara's Advaita. He has his personal view about Reality, he uses reason to show that the *Srutis* give the same view. In fact what he gives is not valid reason but only a show of it and by that people are deluded just as a person can be deluded to take a rope for a snake. Let us illustrate our point by considering one important *sruti* text which Shankara has interpreted to support his view That Brahman never takes a multiplicity of forms, so the world which consists of names and forms must be an illusion. The Chhandogya says: "By knowing earth one can know all earthen pots, the different earthen pots are said to be deformations of earth, but really the earth remains essentially unchanged in all the forms it takes." The simple meaning is that Brahman assumes many forms and itself constitutes the world of multiplicity but in this process it does not undergo any change or deformation, it remains the same Brahman in all its manifestation. Here there is nothing to

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suggest that this world of forms is non-existent or an illusion. The earth is real, the earthen pots are also real, when the pots are destroyed, only the form disappears. But Shankara interprets this Sruti to mean that Brahman never assumes any forms but is only *sad* to have forms. Indeed, reason can interpret any text in various ways, and a sruti which has its source in direct spiritual experience can be interpreted only by spiritual experience and nothing else.

Though Prof. Malkani says that reason cannot give us higher knowledge, nowhere in his book he has referred to the sruti texts, but has tried to prove the illusoriness of the world by reasoning. The type of logic he uses is a very ancient thing; we find it well illustrated in Zeno's famous dialectic by which he sought to prove that all motion is an illusion. When an arrow moves, at every moment it rests at some point, thus it is resting always and there is no motion. One example from the book will suffice. Immortality of the soul is one of the insoluble problems of philosophy. But our author finds it very simple. Take the analogy of sleep. It has a meaning only in relation to waking. If a person never wakes from his sleep he will never know that he slept. Thus death has a meaning only if there is life before it and after it. There are some people who find satisfaction in these tricks of words and thought as people take interest in card tricks. There is a show of reason where there is no reason at all. In that way the book illustrates how Maya works. Professor Malkani says that all objectivity is illusory, all knowledge and reasoning are illusory, so his book with all its arguments and he himself are illusions, an illusion trying to prove by an illusory attempt that this world is an illusion.

We fail to see how such an illusory philosophy can give us the highest happiness and help us to make our life noble and worth living. If the world is an illusion and only this knowledge can save us, why live in the world and act in it? Shankara himself did not renounce action. His life was a flagrant contradiction of the teaching that only complete renunciation of work can bring true knowledge and liberation. He was one of the greatest workers the world has ever seen. What we need today is not a repetition of the preaching of the illusoriness of the world. We have to accept the true Advaita which asserts the reality of the world as well as the reality of Brahman of which it is the manifestation. The world has a meaning and a purpose, we have to find that out and attune our life to it, only then we can reach the highest goal.

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(2)

Sri Auróbindo and the Soul Quest of Man. By Nathaniel Pearson.
G. Allen & Unwin Ltd. Sh. 10-6 net.

The arrival of this beautifully produced book is a great piece of good fortune for seekers after the universal vision. Than Sri Aurobindo there has been no greater spiritual teacher in recent years since, perhaps, Ramakrishna died 60 years ago, and his influence is little accessible, outside India. But Sri Aurobindo is another matter; by culture and education he is equally planted in both West and East and is the perfect interpreter of each to the other. What is more important for the many of us is that he is a great spiritual Light that we can contact and study in our own language and idiom.

Sri Aurobindo made no concessions to superficial interest, or what might be called the entertainment value of the spiritual quest. He taught and wrote always at a high level for the utterly sincere person, and his most important books are serious reading which require solid study: because he left no ideas unexplored in his exposition they are usually long and detailed. It is an enormous help if, preliminary to the study of such important writings, the interested aspirant can get a general notion of what it is all about, and here comes Mr. Nathaniel Pearson to give it him. As a disciple for some years under the Master himself, and as a present member of the Ashram in Pondicherry, Mr. Pearson presents clearly and in short order an intensive, but extremely readable study in 128 pages of the first twelve chapters of *The Life Divine*, which is unquestionably the Magnum opus of Sri Aurobindo. To quote from the jacket—"Nathaniel Pearson provides a clear and illuminating exposition of the basic metaphysical principles of Sri Aurobindo" and it is, therefore, of particular use to people interested in the philosophical and metaphysical aspects of what Sri Aurobindo offers to the world. For the mystic his book is a close and helpful reconciliation of the light of mystical perception with the ideas which this perception takes when given form and definition in words and philosophies.

Although one has the faith that Light penetrates "when the time comes" it must be the case that the time can be shortened by the self-directed efforts of the seeker—otherwise we fall into the grip of predestination and the fatalism that is such a convenient vehicle for spiritual laziness and material

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inertia. There is a dynamism about Sri Aurobindo's presentation of the eternal truths which accords perfectly with our Western spirit of the adventurous in all fields of life. There has always been a reluctance in the West to "write off" the material aspect of living, which seems to be so generally required by many Indian paths and yogas, as a preliminary or even a necessity to establishment in the pure Light of the spirit. It appears to us that it is not for nothing that our material bodies and surroundings can be brought to beauty, effectiveness, and purity by faith, devotion, effort and sincerity, and we recoil from the need for fierce austerities and a basic aversion to material life. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is a different matter entirely and its basic material is supplied by the daily life as it is lived by, and unrolls before, the aspirant. Mr. Pearson says—"But if the true destiny of man's existence is to manifest the Divine Reality here in this earthly life—and no other goal can be envisaged—then the individual is indeed the living point through which the Divine can act and ultimately bring about the emergence of Perfection in the world."

It is true that the individual's chief and central task is to get behind and beyond his ego; the ego is firmly entrenched in the error of its own self-sufficiency and absolute importance and this must be broken down or transcended. Not until this is done in some measure can we become aware of the true cosmic unity behind the veil of external appearances and come into actual and dynamic contact with the "peace that passeth all understanding" and which provides the fulfilment and crown of life. This ineffable state—called *Sat-chit-ananda*, or existence-consciousness-bliss in the Hindu systems—quite literally is beyond the understanding of the ordinary mind and is a matter either of realisation or non-realisation. To anyone who has experienced it, it is a fact and a reality. But no amount of arguments or mental persuasion will give a person a clue to what it is if it has not been experienced.

The Path is an individual matter indeed, but the interdependence of human responsibility is a tremendous fact of nature and a condition of human creation. All our seekings and longings for peace and harmony on earth can be of no avail unless as individuals we seek to fulfil our personal spiritual destinies. Mr. Pearson says—"It is only through the full recognition of this divine destiny of the individual soul on earth that the persistent conflict and division in human thought and endeavour can eventually be resolved and harmonized". The very basis of this knowledge is the bringing down into our "ordinary" life of the light that will purify and make the

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knowledge effective. The divine spark secreted within man, which is of the same substance as the Light that comes down to unite with it, is the real link with God, and is His true instrument in the action and progression of the world—and of each individual within it.

Mr. Nathaniel Pearson has done a great service to us.

A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK

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The Advent

Get out of your mind
to have the true Intelligence.
Get out of your sensations
to have the true feelings.
Get out of your sensitiveness
to have the true dynamism.

THE MOTHER

The ADVENT



August 1953

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Slowly the Light grows greater in the East,
Slowly the world progresses on God's road.
His seal is on my task, it cannot fail:
I shall hear the silver swing of heaven's gates
When God comes out to meet the soul of the world.

SRI AUROBINDO
(Savitri Book VII, Canto IV)



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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

THE YOGIC CENTRES

THERE are, of course, the seven well-known yoga-centres in the human body. They are, beginning from below, (1) the end of the spine, (2) the lower abdomen, (3) the navel (4) the heart, (5) the throat, (6) between the eye-brows, and (7) the crown of the head. But there are others extending from below the spine which are not so well-known. It is true, however, that the centres in the individual being end with the spine; what is below belongs more to the universal nature. There is a centre above and beyond the crown; there is also, on the other side, a centre below and away from under the feet. The yoga-centres are centres of consciousness and energy; they are the sources of the various types and qualities of consciousness and energy—they indicate the many planes of consciousness-energy. There are people who actually feel that their force and strength come from below, as if these stream into them like a spring from under the feet. This

* Based on the Mother's Talks.

THE ADVENT

region from below the spine end to the feet is that of the subconscious and what extends further down is the domain of the inconscient. We may distinguish five more centres in this lower or infra-spinal region apart from the spine end itself (*mulādhāra*) (1) the knee, (2) the leg, (3) the feet, (4) the sole of the foot and (5) below the feet. That would make the total number of centres as twelve—the mystic number for completeness or integrality.

The centre at the bottom of the spine, which is the basis of the individual consciousness is seen as a serpent—a serpent coiled up and asleep, with perhaps just the head sticking up in a very somnolent manner. It represents the normal human consciousness, bottled up, narrow, ignorant, asleep; human energy, too, at this level is obscure and mechanical, extremely limited. The whole energy potential, the consciousness-force is locked up in the physical body consciousness. Now the serpent does not remain asleep forever. It has to wake up, it wakes up. That is to say, man's consciousness awakes, grows and rises upward. The serpent one day shakes its head, lifts it up a little more, begins to sway its hood, as if trying to throw off the sleep and look about. It slowly uncoils itself and rises more and more. It rises and passes through the centres one by one, becomes more and more awake, gathers new light and potency at each centre. Finally, fully awakened, it rises to its full height, erect, straight like a rod, its tail end at the bottom of the spine and its hood touching the crown of the man's head. The man is then the fully awakened, the perfectly self-conscious man. The movement does not stop there, however; for the serpent presses further on, it strikes with its hood the bottom of the crown and in the end breaks through and passes beyond like a flash of lightning. One need not fear the break through, there is no actual, physical breaking or fracture of the skull. Although it is said that once you have gone over and beyond your head, you are not likely to return, you go for good. In other words, the body does not hold together very long after the experience, it drops and dies. And yet it need not be so, it is not the whole truth. For when you have gone beyond, you can come back too, carrying the superconscious light with you. That is to say, the serpent, now luminous,—pure and free energy—can enter the body again, this time with its head down and the tail up. It enters blazing, illumining with its superconscious light the centres one by one, giving man richer and richer consciousness, energy and life, transforming the being more and more. The Light comes down easily enough to the heart region; then the difficulty begins, the regions below gradually become darker and denser and it is a hard task for the Light to penetrate as it goes further down. If it

THE YOGIC CENTRES

succeeds in reaching the bottom of the spine, it has achieved something miraculous. But there is a further progress necessary, if man—and the world with him—is to realise a wholly transformed supraconscious life. In other words, the Light must touch and enter not only the physical stratum of our being but the others too that lie below, the subconscious and inconscient. That has been till now a sealed dungeon, something impossible to approach and tackle.

And yet it is not an impossibility. Not only it is not impossible, we have to make it possible. Not only so, man's destiny demands that it should be inevitable. If man is to be a transformed being, if he is to incarnate here below something of the Divine Reality, if his social life on earth is to be the expression of the light and harmony of the Spirit Consciousness, then he has to descend into these nether regions, break open the nethermost as he has done in regard to the uppermost and unite the two.

Here is a curious story about man and his destiny. What is he, the normal man? He is a slave, a bond slave. He may have the illusion that he has ideas and movements, his own, he has even free scope to put them to execution. But it will not take long to discover that it is an illusion, a great deception. His plans do not mature, his efforts beat against an iron wall. The more he observes and sees things squarely he finds that he is bound hand and foot. He is driven by forces and things over which he has no control whatsoever. He is a slave to circumstances; he is checked by the will of others. His own will has no power or scope; it is wholly ineffectual. He feels more and more a great burden pressing upon the back of the head bending it down, a heavy weight lies upon his shoulders. He somehow trudges on like a beast of burden. He has no free choice or will; his wishes and desires are not consulted. He is driven helplessly on.

But the story does not end here. Man can, if he chooses, alter the situation, turn the tables. He has in him the source of freedom—what he vaguely feels in his outer consciousness; there is a centre from where he is capable of reacting and reasserting. It is the centre where lies his *dharma*, the law of his being. It is his soul. If he once comes in contact with that, makes that the base of his life, he is free from that moment. He holds his head erect. He is no longer bent down. The burden of inexorable circumstances weighs no more on him. He has transcended the circumstances, he stands over them, looks over them. He is now the master and they obey him, he has not to obey them.

This consummation is supremely effected when there is the double

THE ADVENT

breaking of the barrier I was speaking about. The first is the piercing of the veil above, when the consciousness rises into the superconscient, takes the human being into the divine being; the second is the rending of the lower veil and the descent of the divine consciousness into the most material, the subconscient and the inconscient, realising the divine life on earth.

THE HOMOGENEOUS BEING

A thing is homogeneous when all its parts are similar, are *like itself*; in other words, when the whole being is under the same influence, moved by the same consciousness, the same impulsion, the same will. Normally a man is formed of many kinds of fragments, all disparate, each becoming active in its turn at different moments. A part may become active so different from the previous one that the man seems altogether a new person. Each element in us has its own nature and activity, demands its own fulfilment, acts almost as an independent personality. We are composed indeed of multiple personalities.

Thus, for example, you are now in a very good state of consciousness. You have the feeling that you really live for an ideal, for the Divine and are happy. Suddenly something happens; you meet someone, not very desirable, or you do something, not commendable, or you are in the midst of some untoward circumstances and you find you have lost your experience, so much so that you may even lose the memory of it. You wonder how this could have happened. A submerged part of your being has come up, an element that lay aside is now in front: it has come overshadowing or pushing the other into the background.

There are many examples of such double, triple, quadruple or multiple personality. The separate personalities are not conscious of each other, each acts independently and goes its own way. They live together, but do not mix or mingle with each other; they are contained in the same body, that is the only connection. It is like a sack in which pebbles and pearls—if they are indeed real pearls—have been thrown together and the only bond of union is the sack. This is not homogeneity; this is called heterogeneity.

I knew a person who had a will, a clarity of thought and ideas, who prepared intelligently all that needed to be done with regard to a particular work. All on a sudden there was a reversal of the whole being. Another person surged up who not only did not continue the work of his predecessor, but

HOMOGENEOUS BEING

undid it all. He destroyed in 10 minutes what took months for the other to build up. And you can understand the dismay of the first person when he came back and saw the havoc done: he had to start over again.

What then one should do? What is the remedy?

You have to find out in you a seat of consciousness, a signpost firmly planted, deep inside, which is at the same time a mirror. All things, all happenings must pass in front of the mirror; they will be reflected there in their true nature, exactly as they are in their truth and not as they appear or pretend to be. And according to their nature and quality you are to give them places around; the signpost will show where each has to go for its place. The Mirror will judge and test each sentiment, each impulse, each sensation that comes up. If it is pleasant, if it is luminous, if it is what it should be, give it a place near the centre. If, on the other hand, if it is grey, obscure, doubtful, put it away, farther off. If, by chance, any of the unpleasant elements has forced its way up and occupied a near seat, you must warn it sternly and remove it, give it its appropriate seat; when it has recognised itself, changed itself, then only it can be allowed within a nearer ring. It is in this way that you should arrange and group all the elements of your being, according to the value and quality of each one around the central consciousness. That is how you organise your being. You build up a pattern of concentric rings, the nearer the ring to the centre, the purer must be the elements that compose it and therefore of greater value and significance. If you can arrange in this way all the parts and parcels of your being around the psychic centre, each in its own place according to its role and function and all turned towards the central consciousness and inspired and moved by it and there is no element which sounds a differing note, then you have the perfect homogeneity of your nature.

It is a very interesting exercise in which you can engage yourself. If you take it up and follow regularly and assiduously, you will amuse yourself immensely and with profit. Time will never hang heavy, it will bear golden fruits. At the end, say of two or three years, you will see, if you look back, how much you have changed, you wonder how you could have thought or acted as you did. You find yourself a considerably changed personality. You can start the experiment from today itself and see how life becomes more and more amusing, interesting and significant.

1-4-1953

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SINCERITY IS VICTORY

To be sincere and to be candid are not the same thing. To be candid means a simplicity based, in a large measure, upon an ignorance of things. A child is candid, because he is simple and ignorant and hides nothing; he is incapable of it and has no will to deceive anyone. But sincerity is different.

Sincerity is a most difficult thing to have, but it is also the most effective of things. If you have sincerity, you are sure of victory. But it must be true sincerity. Sincerity means that all the elements of your being, all its movements, each and every one, from the most spiritual to the most physical, from the inmost to the outermost, from the topmost to the bottom-most, all parts, severally and wholly and equally are turned to the Divine, they ask for nothing else than the Divine, they live for and by the Divine.

And it is not an easy thing. To be sincere in a part, to be sincere on the whole, to be sincere at moments is easy enough; everybody can have or achieve that much. It is within the capacity of any human being with normal good will, to be sincere in his psychic movements, even if these are rare. But to be sincere in the very cells of your physical body is a still rarer and arduous achievement. To make the body cells so one-pointed that they too feel they cannot live but for the Divine and in and through the Divine. That is true sincerity and that is what you must have.

First you must observe that there is not a day in your life, not an hour, not even a minute when you have not got to rectify or intensify your sincerity. I do not say that you deceive the Divine. None can deceive the Divine, not even the greatest of the Asuras. When you have understood that, still then you will always find moments in your everyday life when you try to deceive yourself. Almost automatically you bring forward reasons in favour of whatever you do. I do not speak of grosser things as when you have quarrelled with a person, for example, and in your anger throw the whole blame upon him. I knew a child who gave a good blow to the door, because it thought the door was at fault. It is always the other party who is in the wrong. But even when you have passed beyond this baby stage, when you are supposed to be a little more reasonable, you do the stupidest of things and produce reasons in self-justification. The real test of sincerity, the very minimum of true sincerity lies here; in your reaction to a given situation, whether you can take automatically the right attitude and do exactly the thing to be done. When, for example, one speaks angrily to you, do you

THINGS SIGNIFICANT AND INSIGNIFICANT

catch the contagion and become angry on your side also or are you able to maintain an unshakable calm and lucidity, see the other man's point or behave as one should?

This is, I say, the very beginning of sincerity, its rudiments. And if you look into you with keener eyes, you will discover thousands of insincerities, more subtle, none the less seizable. Try to be sincere, occasions will multiply when you catch yourself insincere: you will know how difficult a thing it is. You say you belong to the Divine, to the Divine alone and to nothing or to nobody else; "it is the Divine who moves me and does everything in me". And then you do whatever pleases you; you use the Divine as a cloak to cover your indulgence of desires and passions. This also is a gross insincerity and it should not be difficult for you to detect it. Although this is a very common deception, more perhaps to deceive others than to deceive oneself. The mind catches hold of an idea, "all this is Brahman", "I am Brahman",—and you believe or pretend to believe that you have realised it and you can do nothing wrong. There are however subtler movements of insincerity or want of sincerity, even when you have not put on the divine cloak as the cover for your lapses. Even when you think you are sincere there may be movements which are not quite straight, behind which, if you probe unflinchingly, you will find lurking something undesirable. Look to the little movements, thoughts, sensations and impulses, that crowd the margin of your daily life; how many of them are solely turned to the Divine, how many of them are fired with an aspiration towards something higher? You should consider yourself fortunate if you find a few of the kind.

When I say that if you are sincere you are sure of victory, I mean that kind of sincerity, whole and undivided: the pure flame that burns like an offering, the intense joy of existing for the Divine alone where nothing else exists, nothing has any meaning or reason for existence but in the Divine. Nothing has value or interest if it is not this call, this aspiration, this opening to the supreme truth; all this that we call the Divine. You must serve the only reason for which the universe exists: take it away, all disappears.

THINGS SIGNIFICANT AND INSIGNIFICANT

All things are insignificant in ordinary life. The thoughts you think, the actions you do, the feelings you experience, all your movements have no significance at all, they possess no value. They belong to the superficial

THE ADVENT

part of your being, they come and pass away, like ripples on the sea, leaving no trace or effect in the depths. Only at a rare moment, if ever you come in contact with a corner of your soul, if something of that inmost consciousness touches or grazes any limb of yours, that flash of a moment is the only significant thing that happens in the midst of all the useless mass that is your life. This is the only precious point and the rest a world of rubbish. To make your life significant, to give it its true meaning and value, you must then draw back from the surface trivialities and look for something else behind. You must go very deep indeed if things are to cease being insignificant.

THE DIVINE FAMILY

When people, far separated from one another, belonging to different parts of the world or pursuing most diverse professions, meet and gather and work for a common purpose, it means that they are kindred souls and have met together and worked together before in other lives. They felt they belonged to the same family and resolved to act together and collaborate in a common endeavour for a common ideal. Indeed, the souls, in their psychic reality, are grouped in big families, as it were; they come down in groups again and again to take up and continue the work they are engaged in till it is complete.

At a given moment, when the time is ripe, they are called up. The souls are like children asleep, in the peace and repose of the psychic world, awaiting the urge or order for another birth. As soon as the order is given, they wake up and rush down towards the earth. When they drop thus into the earth's atmosphere, they are no longer together, they are scattered about all over the earth. One does not know even where one drops. Also once under the material conditions and circumstances here below, things take a very different aspect. For, the inner impulse, the original purpose gets veiled; the psychic forgets itself and is now surrounded and hedged in by forces, things and persons perhaps quite foreign and contradictory to its nature. Now comes the labour of the soul, to find itself, to look about for the lost end of the thread. The inner urge must be strong enough, the original will categorical enough for the being to surmount all obstacles, pass through all vicissitudes, work through all the windings of a labyrinthine journey and finally arrive. Some perhaps do not arrive at all in a particular life or arrive only to stop at a distance: others arrive not in a straight line, but, as I have said, after a tortuous and round-about wandering. In other words, in their

THE SYMBOLIC IGNORANCE

external mind and impulsion, they look for other things, they are interested in objects that are far other than the soul's interest—like the person who enquired of Yoga, as she thought a Yogi could give her back her spoilt beauty. And yet the soul makes use of such trivial or absurd means to turn the man towards itself, guide him gradually to the place or the family to which he really belongs.

The material world is full of things that draw you away from your soul's quest, from approaching your home. Normally you are tossed about by the forces of ignorant Nature and you are driven even to do the utmost stupidities. There is but one solution, to find your psychic being; and once you have found it, cling to it desperately and not to allow yourself to be drawn out by any temptation, any other impulsion whatsoever.

THE INNER AND THE OUTER

The external part of the being is turned to the Divine: you are conscious of your ideal and as much as possible you conform your behaviour to it. You appear what you want to be. But just behind the line, on the other side of your consciousness—in the subconscious, as it is called—the picture is different. The light has not touched there: the movements go the other way. Things—thoughts, impulses, feelings—hide which you would not like to own. Not that you consciously and deliberately hide them: but they are there as inevitable part and parcel of the original ordinary nature. They form the backyard of the consciousness; there are all kinds of nooks and corners, if not quite open spaces, which have accumulated darkness and dirt. This two-sidedness is common, in fact, universal; you have to be one-sided, that is, of one piece, wholly turned to the light. You must be conscious of these hidden elements and bring them out, expose them to the light calmly, candidly, fearlessly, so that the luminous force may act on them. They have to be drawn out and rejected, or if possible, to be purified and changed. Some are capable of change and become right movements; others are wholly wrong; they belong to the inferior consciousness and have to be cast away without pity.

THE SYMBOLIC IGNORANCE

How can there be dark spots in the light of the full consciousness (the

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Mother's consciousness)? The darkness is only relative and depends upon the degree or status of consciousness. At the outset, on lower and narrower ranges, the light is dim and confined: it is surrounded by a much greater and denser area of darkness. As the consciousness grows, that is to say, manifests itself, as it rises and widens, the obscurity too recedes more and more and slowly fades away. This consciousness is not personal, but something impersonal. In other words, it holds within itself the universe including especially the earth. And earth is a dark object; it is made of ignorance and unconsciousness. The light envelops it and only gradually penetrates and transforms it. The Mother's consciousness is thus the representative consciousness; it represents all that is yet unconscious and striving secretly without knowing towards consciousness; it is also at the same time the light itself that acts and transforms. The divine consciousness embodied acting upon itself thus symbolises and embodies its action upon what would be viewed as others.

Logic is the worst enemy of Truth, as self-righteousness is the worst enemy of virtue; for the one cannot see its own errors nor the other its own imperfections.

SRI AUROBINDO

SONNETS

(SRI AUROBINDO)

THE IRON DICTATORS

I LOOKED for Thee alone, but met my glance
The iron dreadful Four who rule our breath,
Masters of falsehood, Kings of ignorance,
High sovereign Lords of suffering and death.

Whence came these formidable autarchies,
From what inconscient blind Infinity,—
Cold propagandists of a million lies,
Dictators of a world of agony?

Or was it Thou who bor'st the fourfold mask?
Enveloping Thy timeless heart in Time,
Thou hast bound the spirit to its cosmic task,
To find Thee veiled in this tremendous mime.

Thou, only Thou, canst raise the invincible siege,
O Light, O deathless Joy, O rapturous Peace!

14-II-1938

THE ADVENT

THE CONSCIOUS INCONSCIENT

BECAUSE Thou hadst all eternity to amuse,
O dramatist of death and life and birth,
O sculptor of the living shapes of earth,
World-artist revelling in forms and hues,

A mathematician Mind that never errs,
Thou hast played with theorems, numbers, measures, cubes,
Passed cells, electrons, molecules through Thy tubes,
World-forces for thy Science's ministers,

And made a universe of Thy theories,
Craftsman minute, an architect of might,
Protean is thy Spirit of Delight;
An adept of a thousand mysteries.

Or built some deep Necessity, not Thy whim,
Fate and Inconscience and the snare of Time.

24-9-1939

28-9-1939

Often, in the slow¹ ages' long² retreat
On Life's thin ridge through Time's enormous sea,
I have accepted death and borne defeat
To gain some vantage by my fall for Thee.

For Thou hast given the Inconscient the dark right
To oppose the shining passage of my soul
And levy at each step the tax of Night:
Doom, her august accountant, keeps the roll.

All around me now the Titan forces press;
This world is theirs, they hold its³ days in fee;
I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.
Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?

Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,
O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest.

25-9-1939

¹ long ² slow ³ the

HYMN TO INDRA*

1. Indra, cleaver of the ocean, all words increased, most rapturous of the blissful, master of being and lord of stable strengths.

2. In thy friendship, who art stable and strong, we have no fear, O Indra, lord of the various light, towards thee we move forward the conqueror unconquered.

3. The first delights of Indra, his former expandings are not destroyed because, for his praisers he collects fullness of luminous strength.

4. He that breaketh the gate, the young, the seer, appeared immeasurable in force, Indra, that holdeth up all action, the thunderer wide-praised.

5. Thou wert the uncoverer of luminous Vala's lair, O dweller on the hill; into thee the gods without fear entered forcefully protected.¹

6. Voiceful with thy ecstasies, O mighty one, I went towards the sea; the doers of action approached² in the knowledge of that delighter in my speech.

7. By thy containing might thou camest down to the mighty and containing (Shushna); do thou in his revelation fulfilled in completeness lift up their inspirations.

8. Towards Indra who rules in his force our praises yearned, he who hath a thousand delights, ay, they are even more.

SRI AUROBINDO

* Rig Veda I. II

Rishi: Jeta Madhucchandas

¹ Or, 'impelled'

² Or, 'resorted to me'

CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD*

CHAPTER ONE: SECTION I

1. Worship ye OM; the eternal syllable; OM is Udgitha, the chant of Samaveda; for with OM they begin the chant of Sama. And this is the exposition of OM.

2. Earth is the substantial essence of all these creatures and the waters are the essence of earth; herbs of the field are the essence of the waters, man is the essence of the herbs. Speech is the essence of man, Rigveda the essence of Speech, Sama the essence of Rik. Of Sama OM is the essence

3. This is the eighth essence of the essences and the really essential, the highest and it belongs to the upper hemisphere of things.

4. Which among things and which again is Rik; which among things and which again is Sama; which among things and which again is OM of the Udgitha—this is now pondered.

5. Speech is Rik, Breath is Sama; the Imperishable is OM of Udgitha. These are the divine lovers, Speech and Breath, Rik and Sama.

6. As a pair of lovers are these and they cling together in OM the eternal syllable; but now when the beloved and her lover meet, verily, they gratify each the desire of the other.

7. He becomes a gratifier of the desires of men who with this knowledge worships OM the eternal syllable.

8. Now this OM is the syllable of Assent; for to whatsoever one assents, one says OM; and assent is blessing of increase. Verily, he becomes a blessing and increaser of the desires of men who with this knowledge worships OM the eternal syllable.

9. By OM the triple knowledge proceeds; with OM the priest recites the Rik, with OM he pronounces the Yajur, with OM he chants the Sama. And all this is for the heaping up of the Imperishable and by the greatness of It and the Delightfulness.

* From old writings

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10. He does works by OM who has the knowledge, and he also who has it not; but these are diverse, the Knowledge and the Ignorance. Whatsoever work one does with knowledge, with faith and with the secret of Veda, it becomes to him more virile and mighty. This is the exposition of the Eternal letters.

CHAPTER ONE: SECTION 2

1. The Gods and the Demons strove together and both were children of the Almighty Father. Then the Gods took up for weapon OM of Udgitha, for they said "With this we shall overcome these Titans."

2. The Gods worshipped OM as Breath in the nostrils; but the Demons came and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it smells both alike, the sweet scent and the evil odour. For it is smitten through and through with evil.

3. Then the Gods worshipped OM as Speech; but the Demons came and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it speaks both alike, Truth and Falsehood. For it is smitten through and through with Evil.

4. Then the Gods worshipped OM as the Eye; but the Demons came and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it beholds both alike, the fair to see and the foul of favour. For it is smitten through and through with Evil.

5. Then the Gods worshipped OM as the Ear; but the Demons came and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it hears both alike, that which is well to hear and that which is harsh and unseemly. For it is smitten through and through with Evil.

6. Then the Gods worshipped Udgitha as Mind but the Demons came and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it conceives both alike, right thoughts and unlawful imaginations. For it is smitten through and through with Evil.

7. Then the Gods worshipped OM as this which is Breath in the mouth and the Demons rushing against it dashed themselves to pieces; as when an object strikes against firm and solid rock, it dashes to pieces upon the rock.

8. And even as an object hurling against firm and solid rock dashes itself to pieces, so he hurls himself upon destruction whoso desires evil against the Knower or whoso does him hurt; for the Knower is as that firm and solid rock.

9. With this Breath one cognises neither sweet scent nor ill odour, for it has flung Evil from it. Whatsoever one eats with this or drinks, thereby it

CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

cherishes the other breaths. At the end and last when he finds not the breath, the Spirit goes out from the body; verily he opens wide the mouth as he goes.

10. Angiras worshipped OM of Udgitha as Breath in the mouth and men think of Breath in the mouth as Angiras because it is essence of the members of the body.

11. By the strength of Angiras, Brihaspati worshipped OM as Breath in the mouth, and men think of the Breath as Brihaspati, because Speech is the great goddess and Breath is the lord of Speech.

12. By the strength of Brihaspati, Ayasya worshipped OM as Breath in the mouth and men think of the Breath as Ayasya, because 'tis from the mouth it comes.

13. By the strength of Ayasya, Baka the son of Dalbha knew the Breath. And he became the Chanter of the Sama among the Naimishiyas and he chants their desires for them unto fulfilment.

14. Verily, he becomes a chanter unto fulfilment of the desires of men who with this knowledge worships OM of Udgitha, the eternal syllable. Thus far concerning Self is the exposition.

SRI AUROBINDO

Only those thoughts are true the opposite of which is also true in its own time and application; indisputable dogmas are the most dangerous kind of falsehoods.

SRI AUROBINDO

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

(*New series*)

DISEASE is needlessly prolonged and ends in death oftener than is inevitable, because the mind of the patient supports and dwells upon the disease of his body.

Medical Science has been more a curse to mankind than a blessing. It has broken the force of epidemics and unveiled a marvellous surgery; but, also, it has weakened the natural health of man and multiplied individual diseases; it has implanted fear and dependence in the mind and body; it has taught our health to repose not on natural soundness but a rickety and distasteful *witch* compact from the mineral and vegetable kingdoms.

The doctor aims a drug at a disease; sometimes it hits, sometimes misses. The misses are left out of account, the hits treasured up, reckoned and systematised into a science.

We laugh at the savage for his faith in the medicine-man; but how are the civilised less superstitious who have faith in the doctors? The savage finds that when a certain incantation is repeated, he often recovers from a certain disease; he believes. The civilised patient finds that when he doses himself according to a certain prescription, he often recovers from a certain disease; he believes. Where is the difference?

The north-country Indian herdsman, attacked by fever, sits in the chill stream of a river for an hour or more and rises up free and healthy. If the educated man did the same, he would perish, not because the same remedy in its nature kills one and cures another, but because our bodies have been fatally indoctrinated by the mind into false habits.

It is not the medicine that cures so much as the patient's faith in the doctor and the medicine. Both are a clumsy substitute for the natural faith in one's own self-power which they have themselves destroyed.

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

The healthiest ages of mankind were those in which there were the fewest material remedies.

The most robust and healthy race left on earth were the African savages; but how long can they so remain after their physical consciousness has been contaminated by the mental aberrations of the civilised?

We ought to use the divine health in us to cure and prevent diseases; but Galen and Hippocrates and their tribe have given us instead an armoury of drugs and a barbarous Latin hocuspocus as our physical gospel.

Medical Science is well-meaning and its practitioners often benevolent and not seldom self-sacrificing; but when did the well-meaning of the ignorant save them from harm-doing?

If all remedies were really and in themselves efficacious and all medical theories sound, how would that console us for our lost natural health and vitality? The upas-tree is sound in all its parts, but it is still an upas-tree.

The spirit within us is the only all-efficient doctor and submission of the body to it the one true panacea.

God within is infinite and self-fulfilling Will. Unaffected by the fear of death canst thou leave to Him, not as an experiment (but), with a calm and entire faith thy ailments? Thou shalt find in the end He exceeds the skill of a million doctors.

Health protected by twenty-thousand precautions is the gospel of the doctors; but it is not God's evangel for the body, nor Nature's.

Man was once naturally healthy and could revert to that primal condition if he were suffered; but Medical Science pursues our body with an innumerable pack of drugs and assails the imagination with ravening hordes of microbes.

I would rather die and have done with it than spend life in defending myself against a phantasmal siege of microbes. If that is to be barbarous, menlightened, I embrace gladly my Cimmreian darkness.

Surgeons save and cure by cutting and maiming. Why not rather seek to discover Nature's direct all-powerful remedies?

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It should take long for self-cure to replace medicine, because of the fear, self-distrust and unnatural physical reliance on drugs which Medical Science has taught to our minds and bodies and made our second nature.

Medicine is necessary for our bodies in disease only because our bodies have learned the art of not getting well without medicines. Even so, one sees often that the moment Nature chooses for recovery is that in which the life is abandoned as hopeless by the doctors.

Distrust of the curative power within us was our physical fall from Paradise. Medical Science and a bad heredity are the two angels of God who stand at the gates to forbid our return and re-entry.

Medical Science to the human body is like a great Power which enfeebles a smaller State by its protection or like a benevolent robber who knocks his victim flat and riddles him with wounds in order that he may devote his life to healing and serving the shattered body.

Drugs cure the body when they do not merely trouble or poison it, but only if their physical attack on the disease is supported by the force of the spirit; if that force can be made to work freely, drugs are become superfluous.

SRI AUROBINDO

KALIDASA

THE ROLE OF THE APSARAS

THERE is nothing more charming, more attractive in Kalidasa than his instinct for sweet and human beauty; everything he touches becomes the inhabitant of a moonlit world of romance and yet—there is the unique gift, the consummate poetry—remains perfectly natural, perfectly near to us, perfectly human. Shelley's *Witch of Atlas* and Keats' *Cynthia* are certainly lovely creations, but they do not live; misty, shimmering, uncertain, seen in some half-dream where the moon is full and strange indefinable shapes begin to come out from the skirts of the forest; they charm our imagination, but our hearts take no interest in them. They are the creations of the mystic Celtic imagination with its singular intangibility, its fascinating other-worldliness. The Hindu has been always decried as a dreamer and mystic. There is truth in the charge but also a singular inaccuracy. The Hindu mind, in one sense, is the most concrete in the world. It seeks after abstraction, yet is it never satisfied so long as it remains abstraction. To make the objects and concepts of this world concrete, that is comparatively easy; sun and rain or air are, at their most ethereal, the sublimated *secrets* of matter. The Hindu is not contented till he has seized things behind the sunlight also as concrete realities. He is passionate for the infinite, the unseen, the spiritual, but he will not rest satisfied with conceiving them, he insists on mapping the infinite, on seeing the unseen, on visualising the spiritual. The Celt throws his imagination into the infinite and is rewarded with beautiful phantoms, out of which he evolves a pale, mystic and intangible poetry. The Hindu sends his heart and his intellect and eventually his whole being after his imagination and for his reward he has seen God and interpreted existence. It is this double aspect of Hindu temperament which is the secret of our civilisation, our religion, our life and literature; extreme spirituality successfully attempting to work in harmony with extreme materialism. On the one side we spiritualise the material out of all but a phenomenal and illusory existence, on the other we materialise the spiritual in the most definite and

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realistic forms; this is the secret of the high philosophic idealism which to the less capable European seems so impossible an atmosphere and of the prolific idolatry which to the dogmatic and formalising Christian seems so gross. In any other race-temperament this mental division would have split into two broadly disparate or opposing types and attempts at compromise comprising action and reaction would have built up the history of thought. In the myriad-minded and undogmatic Hindu it worked not mental division, but as the first discord which prepares for a consistent harmony; the best and most characteristic Hindu thought regards either tendency as essential to the perfect and subtle comprehension of existence; they are considered the positive and negative sides of one truth, and must both be grasped if we are not to rest in a half light. Hence the entire tolerance of the Hindu religion to all intellectual attitudes except sheer libertinism; hence also the marvellous perfection of grades in thought-attitudes which the Hindu mind travels between the sheer negative and the sheer positive and yet sees in them only a ladder of progressive and closely related steps rising through relative conceptions to one final and absolute knowledge.

The intellectual temperament of a people determines the main character-stamp of its poetry. There is therefore no considerable poet in Sanskrit who has not the twofold impression (spiritual and romantic in aim, our poetry is realistic in method), who does not keep his feet on the ground even while his eyes are with the clouds. The soaring lark who loses himself in light, the ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void are not denizens of the Hindu plane of temperament. Hence the expectant critic will search ancient Hindu literature in vain for the poetry of mysticism; that is only to be found in recent Bengali poetry which has felt the influence of English models. The old Sanskrit poetry was never satisfied unless it could show colour, energy and definiteness, and these are things incompatible with true mysticism. Even the Upanishads which declare the phenomenal world to be unreal, yet have a rigidly practical aim and labour in every line to make the indefinite definite and the abstract concrete. But of all our great poets Kalidasa best exemplifies this twynatured Hindu temperament under the conditions of supreme artistic beauty and harmony. Being the most variously learned of Hindu poets he draws into his net all our traditions, ideas, myths, imaginations, allegories, the grotesque and the trivial as well as the sublime and the lovely, but touching them with the magic wand teaches them to live together in the harmonising atmosphere of his poetic temperament. Under his slight touch the grotesque becomes strange, wild and romantic, the trivial

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refines into a dainty and gracious slightness, the sublime yields to the law of romance, acquires a mighty grace, a strong sweetness; and what was merely lovely attains power, energy and brilliant colour. His creations in fact live in a peculiar light, which is not the light that never was on sea or land but rather our ordinary sunshine recognisable though strangely and beautifully altered. The alteration is not real; rather our vision is affected by the recognition of something the sunbeams concealed and yet the cause of the sunbeams; but it is human sunlight we see always. May we not say it is that luminousness behind the veil of this sunlight which is the heaven of Hindu imagination and in all Hindu work shines through it without overpowering it? Hindu poetry is the only Paradise in which the lion can lie down with the lamb.

The personages of Kalidasa's poetry are with but few exceptions gods and demigods or skiey spirits, but while they preserve a charm of wonder, sublimity or weirdness, they are brought on to our own plane of experience, their speech and thought and passion is human. This was the reason alleged by the late Bankim Chandra Chatterji, himself a poet and a critic of fine and strong insight, for preferring the *Birth of the War-God* to *Paradise Lost*; he thought that both epics were indeed literary epics of the same type, largely planned and sublime in subject, diction and thought, but that the Hindu poem, if less grandiose in its pitch, had in a high degree the humanism and sweetness of simple and usual feeling in which the *Paradise Lost* is more often than not deficient. But the humanism of which I speak is not the Homeric naturalism; there is little of the sublime or romantic in the essence of the Homeric gods though there is much of both in a good many of their accidents and surroundings. But Kalidasa's divine and semidivine personages lose none of their godhead by living on the plane of humanity. Perhaps the most exquisite masterpiece in this kind is the *Cloud Messenger*. The actors in that beautiful love-elegy might have been chosen by Shelley himself; they are two lovers of Faeryland—a cloud, rivers, mountains, the gods and demigods of air, hill and sky. The goal of the cloud's journey is the ethereal city of Alaka crowned by the clouds upon the golden hill and bathed at night in the unearthly moonlight that streams from the brow of Shiva, the mystic's God. The earth is seen mainly as a wonderful panorama by one travelling on the wings of a cloud. Here are all the materials for one of those intangible harmonies of woven and luminous mist with which Shelley allures and baffles us. The personages and scenery are those of *Queen Mab*, of *Prometheus Unbound* and the *Witch of Atlas*. But Kalidasa's city in the mists is no evanescent city of sunlit clouds; it is his own beautiful

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and luxurious Ujjayini idealised and exempted from mortal afflictions; like a true Hindu he insists on translating the ideal into the terms of the familiar, sensuous and earthy.

For death and birth keep not their mystic round
In Ullaca¹, there from the deathless trees
The blossom lapses never to the ground
But lives for ever garrulous with bees
All honey-drunk—nor yet its sweets resign
For ever in their girdling companies...

And when he comes to describe the sole mourner in that town of delight and eternal passion unsated, this is how he describes her, how human, how touching, how common it all is! While we read, we feel ourselves kin to and one with a more beautiful world than our own. These creatures of fancy hardly seem to be an imaginary race but rather ourselves removed from the sordidness and the coarse pains of our world, into a more gracious existence. This, I think, is the essential attraction which makes his countrymen to this day feel such a passionate delight in Kalidasa; after reading a poem of his the world and life and our fellow creatures human, animal or inanimate have become suddenly more beautiful and dear to us than they were before; the heart flows out towards birds and beasts and the very trees seem to be drawing us towards them with their branches as if with arms; the vain cloud and the senseless mountain are no longer senseless or empty, but friendly intelligences that have a voice to our souls. Our own common thoughts, feelings, and passions have also become suddenly fair to us, they have received the sanction of beauty. And then through the passion of delight and the sense of life and of love in all beautiful objects we reach to the Mighty Spirit behind them whom our soul recognizes no longer as an object of knowledge or of worship but as her lover to whom she must fly, leaving her husband, the material life and braving the jeers and reprobation of the world for His sake. Thus by a singular paradox, one of those beautiful oxymorons of which the Hindu temperament is full, we reach God through the senses, just as our ancestors did through the intellect and through the emotions; for in the Hindu mind all roads lead eventually to the Rome of its longing, the dwelling of the Most High God. One can see how powerfully Kalidasa's poetry must have

¹ Alaka

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prepared the national mind for the religion of the Puranas, for the worship of Kali, Our Mother and of Sri Krishna, of Vrindavan, our soul's Paramour. Here indeed lies his chief claim to rank with Valmiki and Vyasa as one of our three national poets, in that he gathered the mind-life of the nation into his poetry at a great and critical moment and helped forward into the groove down which it must henceforth run.

This method is applied with conspicuous beauty and success in the *Urvashi*. The Apsaras are the most beautiful and romantic conception on the lesser plane of Hindu mythology. From the moment that they arose out of the waters of the milky Ocean, robed in ethereal raiment and heavenly adornment, waking melody from a million lyres, the beauty and light of them has transformed the world. They crowd in the sunbeams, they flash and gleam over heaven in the lightnings, they make the azure beauty of the sky; they are the light of sunrise and sunset and the haunting voices of forest and field. They dwell too in the life of the soul; for they are the ideal pursued by the poet through his lines, by the artist shaping his soul canvas, by the sculptor seeking a form in the marble; for the joy of their embrace the hero flings his life into the rushing torrent of battle; the sage, musing upon God, sees the shining of their limbs and falls from his white ideal. The delight of life, the beauty of things, the attraction of sensuous beauty, this is what the mystic and romantic side of the Hindu temperament strove to express in the Apsara. The original meaning is everywhere felt as a shining background, but most in the older allegories, especially the strange and romantic legend of Pururavas as we first have it in the Brahmanas and the Vishnupurana.

But then came in the materialistic side of the Hindu mind and desired some familiar term, the earthlier the better, in which to phrase its romantic conception, this was found in the Hetaira. The class of Hetaira was as recognised an element in the Hindu society as in the Greek, but it does not appear to have exercised quite so large an influence in social life. As in the Greek counterpart they were a specially learned and accomplished class of women, but their superiority over ladies of good families was not so pronounced; for in ancient India previous to the Mahomedan episode respectable women were not mere ignorant housewives like the Athenian ladies, but often they were educated though not in a formal manner; that is to say, they went through no systematic training such as men had, but parents were always expected to impart general culture and accomplishments to them by private tuition at home; singing, music, dancing and to some extent painting were the ordinary accomplishments. General knowledge of morality and

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Scripture and tradition was imperative and sometimes the girls of highborn, wealthy or learned families received special instruction in philosophy or mathematics. Some indeed seem to have pursued a life of philosophic learning either as virgins or widows; but such instances were in pre-Buddhist times very rare. The normal Hindu feeling has always been that the sphere of woman is in the home and her life incomplete unless merged in her husband's. In any case, the majority of the *kulavadhus*, women of respectable families, could hardly be more than amateurs in the arts and sciences; whereas with the Hetaira (Ganikas) such accomplishments were pursued and mastered as a profession. Hence beside their ordinary occupation of singing and dancing in the temples and on great public occasions such as coronations and holy days, they often commanded the irregular affections of highborn or wealthy men who led openly a double life at home with the wife, outside with the Hetaira. As a class, they held no mean place in society; for they must not be confused with the strolling actor or mountebank caste who were a proverb for their vileness of morals. Many of them, no doubt, as will inevitably happen when the restraints of society are not recognized, led loose, immoral and sensual lives; in such a class Lais and Phryne must be as common as Aspasia. Nevertheless the higher and intellectual element seems to have prevailed; those who arrogated freedom in their sexual relations but were not prostitutes are admirably portrayed in Vasantasena of the Toy Cart, a beautiful melodrama drawn straight from the life; like her they often exchanged, with the consent of their lover's family, the unveiled face of the Hetaira for the seclusion of the wife. This class both in its higher and lower type lasted late into the present century, both are now under the auspices of Western civilisation almost entirely replaced by a growing class of professional prostitutes, an inevitable consummation which it seems hardly worth while to dub social reform and accelerate by an active crusade.

The Apsaras then are the divine Hetaira of Paradise, beautiful singers and actresses whose beauty and art relieve the arduous and world-long struggle of the Gods against the forces that tend towards disruption by the Titans who would restore Matter to its original atomic condition or of dissolution by the sages and hermits who would make phenomena dissolve prematurely into the One who is above Phenomena. They rose from the Ocean, says Valmiki, seeking who should choose them as brides, but neither the Gods nor the Titans accepted them, therefore are they said to be common or universal.

We shall now understand why the Apsara is represented as the Hetaira

of heaven. They represent all that is sensuous, attractive or voluptuous in the Universe, the element of desire which, being unspiritual and non-moral, finds its sphere in the satisfaction of the sense of beauty and for that satisfaction needs freedom.

We see then the appropriateness of the Hetaira as a material form into which the vague idea of sensuous beauty in the world might run. For the charm of the Apsara even when working on the plane of the mind, is still vital and sensational; it does not belong to the more rarified regions of the spirit. Now vital and sensational charm in seeking its fulfilment demands that the pursuit of sensuous beauty shall be its sole object, that it shall be without check as without any side-glance or after-thought; it does not seek to be immoral, but simply rejects all moral tests; it recognizes no law but the fulfilment of its own being. This is the very spirit of the Hetaira. The beauty of nakedness sculptured, painted or shaped into words, is not immoral. For the moment we apply the test of morality, it becomes clear that we must either rule it out as not belonging to the world of morality or rule out morality itself for the moment as not belonging to the world of beauty, which is essentially a world of nakedness, in the sense that dress there is an occasional ornament, not a necessary covering; not because there is any essential opposition between them, but because there is no essential connection or necessary point of contact. Ideals of all the plastic and sensuous arts fall within the scope of the Apsara; she is actress, songstress, musician, painter. When they arose from the waves neither the gods nor the demons accepted them as wives; accepted by none they became common to all; for neither the great active faculties of man nor the great destructive recognize sensuous delight and charm as their constant and sufficient mistress, but rather as the joy and refreshment of an hour, an accompaniment or diversion in their constant pursuit of the recognized ideal to which they are wedded. Moreover sensuous beauty has a certain attraction and splendour which seem to some minds finally, and occasionally to most, fairer and brighter than that other ideal which by daily occupation with it, by permissibility and by sameness, grows stale for some, fades into homeliness and routine for others and preserves its real, undying, unageing and unforsakeable freshness and delight only to the few constant and unswerving souls, who are the elect of our human evolution. In all this the idea of the Apsara coincides with the actuality of the Hetaira. In choosing the Hetaira therefore for the Apsara's earthly similitude, the Hindu mind showed once more that wonderful mythopoeic penetrativeness which is as

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unerring and admirable in its way as the Greek mythopoeic felicity and tact.

When Narayana, the primeval and dateless sage of old entered upon austerities in the most secret and desolate recesses of the Snowy Mountains, Indra, prince of the air, always hostile to asceticism, always distrustful of the philosophic and contemplative spirit, was alarmed for the balance of the world and the security of his own rule. He therefore sent the Apsaras to disturb the meditations of Narayana. Then upon the desolate Himalaya Spring set the beauty of his feet; the warm south wind breathed upon those inclement heights, blossoming trees grew in the eternal snow and the voice of the cuckoo was heard upon the mountain tops. It was amidst these vernal sweetnesses that the Apsaras came to Narayana; they were the loveliest of all the sisterhood, and subtlest and most alluring of feminine arts and enchantments was the way of their wooing; but Narayana who is Vishnu the World Saviour when he comes in the guise of the ascetic, moved neither by the passion of love nor by the passion of anger, smiled in the large and indulgent mood of his world-embracing nature and opening his thigh took from it a radiant and marvellous creature, of whose beauty the loveliest Apsaras seemed but pale and broken reflections. Ashamed they veiled their faces and stole silently away from the snowy hermitage. But Narayana called this daughter of his creation Urvasie (she who lies in the thigh of the Supreme, the thigh being the seat of sensuousness) and gave her to Indra to be his most potent defence against the austerities of spiritual longing.

And yet the work of the philosophic mind incidentally serves sensuous and material life by increasing its resources and the depth of its charm. For the power of the philosophic ideals which have profoundly affected humanity are not limited to the domain of the intellect but also affect, enlarge and strengthen man's aesthetic outlook upon the world. The sensuous world becomes fuller of beauty, richer in colours, shades and suggestions, more profound and attractive with each widening of the human ideal. It is Urvasie who sprang from the thigh of the withered hermit cold and not any of those original daughters of the inconstant waves who is the loveliest and most dangerous of the Apsaras.

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In dramatic tone and build therefore this is an admirable creation, but there is so far no hint of the worldwide divineness of Urvasie, of the goddess within the woman. In direct allegory Kalidasa was too skilful an arrist to

deal, but we expect the larger conception of this beautiful and significant figure to enter into or at least colour the dramatic conception of the woman; some pomp of words, some greatness of gesture, some large divinity whether of speech or look to raise her above a mere nymph, however charming, into the goddess we know. Yet in rigidly excluding the grandiose or the coloured Kalidasa has shown, I think, his usual unerring dramatic and psychological tact. Dramatically, to have made both Pururavas and Urvashi equally dramatic in spirit and diction, to have clothed both in the external purple of poetry would have been to offend the eye with unrelieved gorgeousness and converted the play from an interesting and skilfully woven drama into a confused splendour of lyrical dialogue. Psychologically, the divinity and universal charm of Urvashi would have been defaced rather than brought out by investing her with grandeur of feeling or a pomp of poetic ornament. Perfect beauty has in it a double aspect, its intrinsic self and the impression it makes on the vivid and receptive mind. In itself it is simple, unconscious and unadorned, most effective when it is most naked; ceasing to be these, it loses its perfection and a great part of its universal charm. The nude human figure in painting and sculpture, unadorned magic or strength of style and conception in poetry, clear, luminous and comprehensive thought in philosophy, these are what the pursuing human spirit feels to be ideal, highest, most worthy of itself. Drapery blurs the effulgence of the goddess, ornament distracts the spirit and disappoints it of its engrossed and undisturbed sense of possession. On the other hand the mind while most moved by what is simple and natural in its appeal, is romantic in its method of receiving the impression; becoming engrossed and steeped with the idea of it, it directs to it and surrounds it with all the fresh impressions that continually flow in on the consciousness, gathers from it colour, fire and passion, creates around it a host of splendid associations and clothes it in the pomp of its own passionate imagery. The first period of a literary race when its mind is yet virgin and has to create beauty, is invariably simple and classical, the last period when its mind is saturated and full of past beauty is always romantic and æsthetic. The relations of Urvashi and Pururavas are true to this psychological principle. She herself is mere beauty and charm sufficient to itself and commanding delight and worship because she is herself, not because of any graces of expression, imagination, intellectual profundity. But the mind of Pururavas receiving her pure and perfect image steeps her in its own fire and colour, surrounding her with a halo of pomp and glory which reveals himself while seeking to interpret her.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE SOURCES OF POETRY*

THE swiftness of the muse has been embodied in the image of Pegasus, the heavenly horse of Greek legend; it was from the rapid beat of his hoofs on the rock that Hippocrene flowed. The waters of Poetry flow in a current or a torrent; where there is a pause or a denial, it is a sign of obstruction in the stream or of imperfection in the mind which the waters have chosen for their bed and continent. In India we have the same idea; Saraswati is for us the goddess of poetry, and her name means the stream or "she who has flowing motion". But even Saraswati is only an intermediary. Ganga is the real mother of inspiration, she who flows impetuously down from the head of Mahadev, God high-seated, over the Himalaya of the mind to the homes and cities of men. All poetry is an inspiration, a thing breathed into the thinking organ from above; it is recorded in the mind, but is born in the higher principle of direct knowledge or ideal vision which surpasses mind. It is in reality a revelation. The prophetic or revealing power sees the substance; the inspiration perceives the right expression. Neither is manufactured; nor is poetry really a poesis or composition, nor even a creation, but rather the revelation of something that eternally exists. The ancients knew this truth and used the same word for poet and prophet, creator and seer, *sophos*, *vates*, *kavi*.

But there are differences in the manifestation. The greatest motion of poetry comes when the mind is still and the ideal principle works above and outside the brain, above even the hundred-petalled lotus of the ideal mind, in its proper empire, for then it is Veda that is revealed, the perfect substance and expression of eternal truth. The higher ideation transcends genius just as genius transcends ordinary intellect and perception. But that great faculty is still beyond the normal level of our evolution. Usually we see the action of the revelation and inspiration reproduced by a secondary, diluted and uncertain process in the mind. But even this secondary and

* From old writings

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inferior action is so great that it can give us Shakespeare, Homer and Valmeki. There is also a tertiary and yet more common action of the inspiration. For of our three mental instruments of knowledge,—the heart or emotionally realising mind, the observing and reasoning intellect with its aids, fancy and memory, and the intuitive intellect,—it is into the last and highest that the ideal principle transmits its inspirations when the greatest poetry writes itself out through the medium of the poet. But if the intuitive intellect is not strong enough to act habitually, it is better for the poetry to descend into the heart and return to the intellect suffused and coloured with passion and emotion than to be formed directly in the observing intellect.

Poetry written from the reasoning intellect is apt to be full of ingenious conceits, logic, argumentation, rhetorical turns, ornamental fancies, echoes learned and imitative rather than uplifted and transformed. This is what is sometimes called classical poetry, the vigorous and excellent but unemotional and unuplifted poetry of Pope and Dryden. It has its inspiration, its truth and value; it is admirable in its way, but it is only great when it is lifted out of itself into intuitive writing or else invaded by the heart. For everything that needs fire rather than light, driving-force rather than clearness, enthusiasm rather than correctness, the heart is obviously the more potent instrument. Now, poetry to be great must have either enthusiasm or ecstasy.

Yet the poetry that rises up from the heart is usually a turbid stream; our own restless ideas and imaginations mix with the pure inrush from above, and turbulent uprush from below, our excited emotions seek an exaggerated expression, our aesthetic habits and predilections busy themselves to demand a satisfaction greatly beyond their due. Such poetry may be inspired, but it is not always suitable or inevitable. There is often a double inspiration, the higher or ecstatic and the lower or emotional, and the lower disturbs and drags down the higher. This is the birth of romantic or excessively exuberant poetry, too rich in expression, too abundant and redundant in substance. The best poetry coming straight from the right centres may be bare and strong, unadorned and lofty, or it may be rich and splendid; it may be at will romantic or classical; but it will always be felt to be the right thing for its purpose; it is always nobly or rapturously inevitable.

But even in the higher centres of the intuitive intellect there may be defects in the inspiration. There is a kind of false fluency which misses the true language of poetry from dullness of perception. Under the

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impression that it is true and inspired writing it flows with an imperturbable flatness, saying the thing that should be said but not in the way that it should be said, without force and felicity. This is the tamasic or clouded stimulus, active, but full of unenlightenment and self-ignorance. The thing seen is right and good; accompanied with the inspired expression it would make very noble poetry. Instead, it becomes prose rendered unnatural and difficult to tolerate by being cut up into lengths. Wordsworth is the most characteristic and interesting victim of tamasic stimulus. Other great poets fall a prey to it, but that superb and imperturbable self-satisfaction under the infliction is his alone. There is another species of tamasic stimulus which transmits an inspired and faultless expression, but the substance is neither interesting to man nor pleasing to the gods. A good deal of Milton comes under this category. In both cases what has happened is that either the inspiration or the revelation has been active, but its companion activity has refused to associate itself in the work.

It is when the mind works at the form and substance of poetry without either the revelation or the inspiration from above that respectable or minor poetry is produced. Judgment, memory and imagination may work, command of language may be there, but without that secondary action of a higher than intellectual force, it is labour wasted, work that earns respect but not immortality. Doggerel and bastard poetry take their rise not even in the observing intellect but from the sensational mind or the passive memory guided only by the mere physical pleasure of sound and emotion. It is bold, blatant, external, imitative, vulgar; its range of intellectuality and imaginativeness cannot go beyond the vital impulse and the vital delight. But even in the sensational mind there is the possibility of a remote action from the ideal self; for even to the animals who think sensationally only, God has given revelations and inspirations which we call instincts. Under such circumstances even bastard poetry may have a kind of worth, a kind of inevitability. The poet in the sensational man may be entirely satisfied and delighted, and even in the more developed human being the sensational element may find a poetical satisfaction not of the highest. The best ballad poetry and Macaulay's lays are instances in point. Scott is a sort of link between sensational and intellectual poetry. While there are men mainly sensational, secondarily intellectual and not at all ideal, he will always be admired.

Another kind of false inspiration is the rajasic or fiery stimulus. It is not flat and unprofitable like the tamasic, but hasty, impatient and vain. It is

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eager to avoid labour by catching at the second best expression or the incomplete vision of the idea, insufficiently jealous to secure the best form, the most satisfying substance. Rajasic poets, even when they feel the defect in what they have written, hesitate to sacrifice it because they also feel and are attached either to what in it is valuable or to the memory of their delight when it was first written. If they get a better expression or a fuller sight, they often prefer to reiterate rather than strike out inferior stuff with which they are in love. Sometimes, drifting or struggling helplessly along that shallow and vehement current, they vary one idea or harp on the same imagination without any final success in expressing it inevitably. Examples of the rajasic stimulus are commonest in Shelley and Spenser, but few English poets are free from it. This is the rajasic fault in expression. But the fiery stimulus also perverts or hampers the substance. An absence of self-restraint, an unwillingness to restrict and limit the ideas and imaginations, is a sure sign of a rajasic ideality. There is an attempt to exhaust all the possibilities of the subject, to expand and multiply thoughts and imaginative visions beyond the bounds of the right and permissible. Or else the true idea is rejected or fatally anticipated by another which is or seems to be more catching and boldly effective. Keats is the principal exemplar of the first tendency, the Elizabethans of the second. The earlier work of Shakespeare abounds with classical instances. As distinguished from the Greek, English is pronouncedly rajasic literature and, though there is much in it that is more splendid than almost anything done by the Greeks,—more splendid, not better,—a great deal even of its admired portions are rather rich or meretricious than great and true.

The perfect inspiration in the intuitive intellect is the sattwic or luminous inspiration, which is disinterested, self-contained, yet at will noble, rich or vigorous, having its eye only on the right thing to be said and the right way to say it. It does not allow its perfection to be interfered with by emotion or eagerness but this does not shut it out from ecstasy and exaltation. On the contrary, its delight of self-enjoyment is a purer and more exquisite enthusiasm than that which attends any other inspiration. It commands and uses emotion without enslaving itself to it. There is indeed a sattwic stimulus which is attached to its own luminosity, limpidity and steadiness, and avoids richness, force or emotion of a poignant character even when these are needed and appropriate. The poetry of Matthew Arnold is often though not always of this character. But this is a limited inspiration. Sattwic as well as rajasic poetry may be written from the uninspired

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intellect, but the sensational mind never gives birth to sattwic poetry.

One thing has to be added. A poet need not be a reflective critic; he need not have the reasoning and analysing intellect and dissect his own poetry. But two things he must have in some measure to be perfect, the intuitive judgment which shows him at a glance whether he has got the best or the second-best idea, the perfect or the imperfect expression and rhythm, and the intuitive reason which shows him without analysis why or wherein it is best or second-best, perfect or imperfect. These four faculties, revelation or prophecy, inspiration, intuitive judgment and intuitive reason, are the perfect equipment of genius doing the works of interpretative and creative knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

When, O eager disputant, thou hast prevailed in a debate,
then art thou greatly to be pitied, for thou hast lost a chance of
widening knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

SENSE AND PERCEPTION

I

SCIENCE seeks to know by a systematic inquiry; and from its probings into the nature and relation of things, it strives to bring its discoveries into a practical and utilisable form that can be applied to all our outer activities. Thus science has essentially a practical aim,—to bring knowledge, which is at present beyond our sense-awareness, into a working relation with things around; and in this way scientific principles are made usable. In fact the utility of science's findings has increasingly become the major concern of its exponents. It is clear however that our use of science has grown out of all proportion to the real knowledge we have of the underlying processes and their origin. We have objectivised the knowledge before it has been properly subjectivised and become a possession of our inner consciousness. We are not therefore master of this knowledge, although we can use it,—which even an automaton can be built to do. True mastery implies not only a facile and accurate handling, but the possession of the consciousness behind the action. Science, in pursuit of a rapid, though by no means perfect handling of knowledge, has obviously neglected or by-passed this all-important aspect.

Within the present framework of science we find what seems to be an accepted and fundamental fact; namely, that all physical phenomena ultimately reduce themselves to an Energy, either in the form of waves or of organised particles. On the one hand there is the environing field, and on the other the nuclear, persistent, dynamic centres contained in it, (whether these belong to the particles of atoms or the planetary systems of the universe). Although this is demonstrably a real picture of the nature of the world, yet it nevertheless represents but a partial—the material—aspect of it. Even further investigation by science on these lines has but simplified the field, revealing an ultimate monism of substance based on the common electrical

* *The Life Divine* Vol. II. Chap. I pp 5-9 (2nd Edition.)

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energy of electrons, protons, and their associate particles. But this is a monism that does not yet explain differences; for science has not yet been able to formulate the fundamental difference between the material energy and that which life displays. Evolution shows that from simple elemental particles complex molecules are constantly being built up; and out of these latter organic matter has come into being as the basis of living substance. In this way life, with a different mode of working from the material combination and disintegration of substance, has been able to remould the very nature of matter, by what appears to be a rapid and continuous cycle of building up and breaking down. This we see in the familiar process of growth, reproduction and decay. Yet science, explaining these phenomena exclusively by the laws of matter, naturally fails to take into account the fact that the life-energy is essentially creative. In fact the action of life has been found to be quite opposed, or rather compensatory, to that of the material energy, —as the simple demonstrable experiment of the nerve impulse shows, (where this latter is an "all-or-nothing" impulse working by non-material laws, quite distinct from the familiar harmonic energy wave pattern of the material type). For this reason the physical and chemical processes explain only part of the functioning and behaviour of living organisms. The seed, which grows into the tree, already contains within it the inherent factors that are to bring forth the mature plant. We might say that the future course of any given seed is already broadly determined in its embryo; so that we cannot place the onus of character formation wholly on the environment, although this latter may be instrumental in accentuating or suppressing latent, pre-existent characters. Obviously by merely exposing the existence of genes and chromosomes, or demonstrating the action of environment, science does not explain the subtle psychological characters that these elemental units embody or enfold. For how can these mere forms be themselves that freedom which evolves characters unique for each individual, or which determines species characteristic of the type, class or genera, all that the seed holds in itself from the very beginning? It is obvious that the multiple-formative activity of the life-energy —and less so the elusive phenomenon of mind —cannot be explained solely in terms of material laws and environment, as science until recently has been endeavouring to do.

While it is apparent that infinite differentiation is a basic process of Nature, (and because of this fact man is impelled to systematise his knowledge), we are also forced to see that this condition could not exist unless it were subject to a higher Law that relates all differences to a greater and wider harmony.

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For all is ultimately cosmos, and not a haphazard and chaotic cross-pattern as it may superficially seem. Probing below the surface, we find that there is an underlying order and pattern in Nature, even though one can as yet discern only fleeting glimpses of the Whole of it. It is only when we consider more specifically the rhythm of life, apart from the material phenomena as the predominant factor, that we begin to discern a purpose, a directive drive, in Nature's working, which (disconcertingly to our logic) seems to operate through blind impulses or by a wasteful, laborious and circuitous out-branching. It is clear also to man's intelligence, that his own advent into the terrestrial evolution had brought something new—the mind-principle—in a living and material form. What we experience in our own perception gives us but a cross-section of this complex relation, where the interplay of mind is canalised and relayed through the material substance of the body, by means of the intermediary action of the life-energy in the form of nervous impulses. This forms the reticulated pattern of our own experience and contact with the world; the consideration of which brings us directly to the root of man's outer awareness,—grounded on the sense-mind and the organs of sense which have evolved from the lower levels of Nature. These channels, in fact, have been the natural means in man's progressive advancement, by which he has been able to grow out of the animal stage, and orient himself to the outer world; for through a refinement and discriminative use of sense he has enriched his knowledge and experience of the world. Also it is the sense-mind, we must note, that has introduced him to the wider recognition of the infinite differences of things. Thus, by scientific endeavour he has classified and recorded his observations and knowledge; while through artistic and aesthetic experience he has explored the wider fields of colour, sound, harmony and image-pattern, —all of which have brought him a far more varied and wider store of knowledge extending beyond his ordinary sense perception.

In this connection we might look a little more closely into the action of the sense-mind, on which man's knowledge is built, and from which he must obviously widen and grow if he is to develop new and more subtle faculties that can bring into his activities wider ranges of consciousness. For it is clear that the present limited faculties of sense and consciousness by no means represent the final condition of man. The fundamental fact is that the world we perceive is essentially mind's picture of Reality,—or at least the individual mind's sector of it. But this does not mean that our world-picture is merely an individual creation,—each one composing a private world of his own. There is more in mental perception than the individual's use of mind:

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energy, and more than a mere pattern-weaving as its sole function. We have to take into account the present status and limitation of Mind itself, and its influence on the material world. An occult knowledge has revealed that Mind is a cosmic entity or principle, which from its own self-existent plane had entered into the evolutionary process, (as Life also had done), and had introduced therein successively wider and freer ranges of consciousness; a process, of course, which is not yet complete. In this way a progressive working relation between the material substance, the life-energy and the power of mind was established in the earth-nature.

But, as Sri Aurobindo has pointedly shown, we have to take into account the fact that cosmic Mind is itself a subordinate power,—more precisely the instrument of Supermind, the divine creative Power, from which it became separated. Thus through the original entry of Mind into the cosmic process, separated and fallen from its origin in Supermind, the true nature of Matter and Life had become modified. This subordination of Matter and Life to the nature of Mind has, in fact, been a necessary phase for the full inter-play and development of the lower order of the evolution; but as a consequence there had also been the over-expansion of Mind's natural self-centredness which became the all-dominant principle in the way of the world's progress. And consequently the persistent factor of ego, as the centre of the individual's action, became the obstinate barrier to the evolution, and to earth's opening to the Light of the higher Power beyond Mind. Yet this condition, since it is rooted in Mind's fundamental lapse and separation from the divine Light, is not a permanent state of affairs for the earth-life; the way of its transformation was seen and indeed opened up by Sri Aurobindo. It is for man the mental being, through his growth in consciousness, to prepare himself for the full entry of the transforming Light of the Divine Power, which alone can change the world.

We can say therefore that because of mind's limitation the static, solid, impenetrable forms we perceive are a direct indication of the present range of our sense-perception. Science, indeed assures us that pure matter is itself a highly dynamic and fluid, though minutely organised, condition of substance; so that for man to even perceive directly the truth of this elemental fact would necessitate a far greater widening of his vision, as well as the development of a deeper insight to penetrate and comprehend the secret nature of things. When we become directly aware of the universal Energy as a unifying substratum or matrix, we also begin to realise the diversity of its forms,—the material, vital, mental and even supramental gradations. We

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are then led to realise that this all-enveloping Energy is above all a secret Consciousness and not merely a mechanical Force,—but a Consciousness that is ever moulding out of itself diverse forms and grades of substance, while ever remaining in its true Nature the one divine creative Power that exists everywhere and in all things. From our present-day pragmatic standpoint, however, this conception of a cosmic, and at the same time supracosmic, Consciousness acting apart from one's own or the collective awareness is as yet foreign to our minds; largely because we have lost, in the course of the individual and narrowed ego development, the contact with the cosmic vision of Reality, such as the ancient cultures fostered. Thus it is not surprising that with a narrower vision and outlook man's present efforts to perceive the true objective reality have only resulted in a fragmented and indecisive picture of the world. In an attempt to arrive at a wholeness we try to explain the nature of things in terms of one exclusive principle. Scientific thought of the past hundred years, for example has swung between an explanation of the universe based on an unalterable necessity, and one based on chance. Whereas probability is the present supposed factor on which the universal laws depend, hitherto a rigid determinism was thought to be the fundamental law of the physical world. Here we are really witnessing the characteristic indecisive swing of mind as it oscillates between two extremes,—a fact which only serves to indicate the real fixity of mind and its resistance against any attempted change in its central standpoint. It is this reaction which stands in the way of mind's widening beyond its present pivot and ego-centre.

II

Let us try to examine, by way of digression, some aspects of the visual sense in man, in order to see the present limitation and the possible line of development of the senses as a whole. Our attempt to explain this mechanism, in terms of current science and common experience, may be stated as follows. When light vibrations of a certain range of oscillation strike the retina of the eye, myriads of nerve-endings are stimulated according to the oscillations carried by the light-waves; and these differing stimuli give us a sense of colour and form. In the nerve-fibres these vibrations become vital impulses which are transmitted to the appropriate centres in the brain. Here the vital impulses are received as a series of signals or rapid punches, and this instigates mental perception. By the signal received and the vital impulse imparted, the sense-mind can contact the object or its image directly,

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using the line of the receptive physical vibration as its immediate path of contact. In this way the sense-mind actually forms its mental impression of things, though we should note that the direct contact of sense with the actual object only occurs when the latter is sufficiently close. Beyond a certain distance (perhaps even fifty yards from the observer) the real or rather vital impression ceases and we contact only the projected image which has been formed by the mind according to the physical vibrations received by it. This means that only within a comparatively short range of the individual can the vital impulse project the sense sufficiently to contact the object directly, although it should be observed that the mind-energy itself, apart from the sense-channel and the vital impulse, is not restricted to this limitation of distance. The main limitation of mind lies rather in its surface awareness, in its habit of concentrating on fragments as wholes, and above all in creating the unreal separation between the subjective and objective experience.

It is a matter of common experience that distant objects are perceived by us only as detached images; it is only closeness that brings with it the intimacy of perception, and even near objects viewed through a medium, such as a glass-window, lose their intimacy of direct contact, and appear to us detached or cut off, as they indeed are, from the sense-mind's vital contact with them. We must note, however, that the above presentation of sense-perception is necessarily only a simplified one-track version of it, for one perceives a whole diversity of objects simultaneously, and in their proper spatial relation, within the ordinary elliptico-sectional field of our vision. Mind-energy receives all these impressions separately and fragmentarily, and yet perceives them in a proper relation and perspective,—which is a forceful indication of mind's power of co-ordination and perspective. It is thus that the mind builds up a composite picture of the world, aided by the limited range of its sensory function. But obviously mind's sensibility has yet to be further extended by a freer and more direct use of its own potential powers, opened out by the penetrating Light of the divine Power itself.

We have to see how far our sensory relation with the world can be extended so that a natural insight or feeling-into things is not separated from a true detached vision of the whole. In this respect we have to remember that it is in consequence of the sense-mind's practical utility that the ego has interposed the false idea that the sensory function is our sole link with the outer reality; and by this means the ego seeks to maintain its dominant control over man's means of knowing. We are not only made dependent on the

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information of the senses for our knowledge, but the senses themselves have been made the slave of the ego's pleasure, and are even discouraged from developing beyond their present limited power. Our ethics in fact have been largely built up around the need to counteract this misuse of the senses, by instigating a proper guidance for them; but since this endeavour has been chiefly based on the principle of suppressing or curtailing their function, it has not struck sufficiently deep to change the ego itself, which is the real core of the difficulty. The obvious cure is to widen one's consciousness, and hence broaden the range of perception from the centre of one's being, and see the senses themselves in their proper relation to knowledge.

The senses are essentially instruments, and for their right use in a Divine-directed endeavour it is essential that they become channels of a higher and wider range of awareness, such as it is the goal of both spiritual and worldly endeavour to accomplish. By this opening we should acquire a deeper perception which reaches more intimately and directly to the underlying origin of things. Just as a mentalised sense gives us a purely mental picture, so a spiritualised sense would reveal to us the true spiritual content of things. What we at present refer to vaguely as intuition is but a step towards this spiritualised perception, whereby the sense-mind would become a freer and more plastic instrument for man's relation with the world. Our aim would not be to suppress or distort the utility of the senses, since they are our immediate earthly link with the world, but rather to train and purify their responses by the widening and opening of mind to the higher Truth. Thus our senses would become the subtilised instruments of a new consciousness, that radiates from the awakened soul or psychic being in us. The illumined and intuitive levels of mind would more readily open in response to the natural and unrestrained growth of the soul. Little by little the senses would discard their attachment to egoistic pleasure, especially those centred on the lower vital desires and sensational stimulations. For these habits only serve to keep the senses tied hypnotically to a fixed narrow orbit of action and reaction. Yet they cannot remain so while ever the light of Truth is steadily focussed on their every activity, and where there is the firm and quiet resolve, the inner aspiration to transcend these lower attachments.

In the past there have been two valuable aids, as we have observed, in the elevation of man's sensibility: one in the artistic field—training the senses to an appreciation of the higher aesthetic experiences; and the other in a growing scientific knowledge and inquiry that strives towards a more accurate and exact objective picture of reality, through the disciplining of the senses,

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and through a careful and detailed observation. It is all the more necessary, therefore, that we, in this modern age, admit a deeper and more rarefied sense awareness to enter into our scientific inquiry and our artistic pursuits, and not seek to depend on external instruments however refined and sensitive they may be made. A composite and global vision is the essential basis for us; if we are to widen our point of observation, and integrate our present scattered knowledge into a co-ordinate pattern. This introduces the necessity of incorporating a third powerful lever for the advancement of man,—that of spiritual knowledge, whose first and fundamental concern is to inculcate a higher perception as the basis of man's vision and outlook. And this indeed is the more secure basis, both for man's advancement in science and for the necessary widening and heightening of his artistic outlook.

Thus we reach the point where as a normal part of one's training and education one has to learn to be able to control and be ever vigilant in the use of the sense faculties. All our reactions of sense, and the impressions they carry, must be constantly subject to a discrimination that knows and can accept or reject, above the sway of the sense-mind that ordinarily reacts undiscerningly. Even Reason and an ethical code of behaviour cannot adequately fill in the need here, since the former is itself an instrument and not the true possessor of knowledge, while the latter has become more of a restraining and negative force rather than a positive integrating factor. It is only a higher and illumined sphere of knowledge beyond the intellect, that can exercise in us the necessary enlightenment, and give us the mastery and discernment to instigate the proper use of sense impressions. A two-fold process is necessary for us,—on the one hand a spiritualisation of mind through the higher illumined knowledge, and on the other the progressive emergence of soul which is indeed urging to become active in us. The spiritualised mind, detached from the strong pull of the ego, would thence open more and more to the luminous plane of the divine Truth.

We have to remember, however, that the training and elevation of the senses are but themselves the preparation for a higher Power to enter and become operative in the earth-field. For mind alone cannot create or bring forth a higher Reality; but by preparing itself and becoming aware of that Reality it can be the faithful instrument of it,—which is its true role. At the same time the surrender of mind's power to the spiritual Reality is the most powerful uplift in the growth of the inner spirit, which brings the Reality of the Divine Consciousness into one's very life and being. By this opening and spiritualisation of the mind, the basis would be laid here in the

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world for the full emergence of the psychic being to bring, in its own way, a new perception, centred on the Reality of the Divine's Omnipresence. We should possess a universal relation with all things and beings; and this would form the needed and natural basis for our advancing knowledge and ever-extending inquiry.

N. PEARSON.

A thought is an arrow shot at the truth; it can hit a point, but not cover the whole target. But the archer is he who will be satisfied with his success to ask anything farther.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE THREE CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL SEEKERS

IN a short foreword to the French original of her *Prayers and Meditations*, the Mother says,

"This book is composed of extracts from a journal written during years of intensive yogic discipline. It may serve as a guide to three main categories of seekers: those who have embarked on self-conquest, those who have the will to find the path leading to the Divine, and those who aspire to consecrate themselves more and more to the Divine Work."

The first category, according to the Mother, comprises those who have undertaken the work of self-conquest. Self-conquest means two things: 1) conquest of the lower self of ignorance and desire and suffering, and 2) attainment or recovery of the true Self, which is infinite and immortal and radiant with knowledge. "Know thyself", *atmanam viddhi*, is the recurring refrain of all spiritual teaching, whether it is Eastern or Western. Socrates insists on it no less than the Upanishads and the Gita. Indeed, whatever may be our intellectual knowledge and attainments, however much we may be wise and successful in the ways of the world, so long as we do not know the essence, the deathless reality, of our being, we are in ignorance, and have to undergo the inevitable fate of ignorance,—struggle and suffering and spiritual obscurity. That all in us,—our body, life and mind, our thoughts and ideas and emotions and sensations—are in constant flux, even a moment's calm reflection will convince us; and to remain identified with this stream of impressions and energies, as the Buddha imagined it, is to be condemned to the fate of the stream itself, which is ceaseless formation, mutation and disintegration. It is this flowing stream that we call our personality, a fragile figure of inconstant elements; and we feel that we die when these elements dissolve and disperse, and we live so long as they maintain a semblance of continuity.

In spite of all the phenomenal achievements of science, the mystery of life and death still eludes its grasp. And what it cannot grasp, it has the

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facile habit of denying altogether. If there are any suprasensible realities or anything in man that survives the death of his body, it seems to assert, they must come within its purview and satisfy its material tests. The subtle must shed its subtlety and appear in the garb of the gross, if it wants to be sure of its own existence and registered as a genuine scientific reality!

But faith in immortality is ingrained in the heart of man. It is not an intellectual, but an instinctive faith, which may be overlaid by mental scepticism or repelled by the materialistic denial, but can never be snuffed out for ever. The dread of death, so universal in humanity, is an inverse reflex of this faith in immortality. Who wants to die? Not even the most wretched of men; for, behind all his wretchedness, there lurks the hope of a new dawn and the passing of the night of his miseries. This hope is essentially a child of the faith in self-persistence. Even when one invokes or courts death, one does not really seek an utter self-extinction, but consciously or subconsciously, longs for a better life, either here again or elsewhere, under more favourable and harmonic conditions. This instinctive clinging to life and the perennial youth of hope in the heart of man witness to a truth beyond themselves and are an obscure but undeniable hint of immortality.

But man must know what is immortal in him, and but for which this faith in self-persistence would not have been. That which is immortal in mortals is hidden deep within them, covered up, layer upon layer, with the teguments of the surface self. "One must separate him with patience from one's own body, as one separates from a blade of grass its main fibre," says the Kathopanishad. One has, first, to distinguish between one's changing outer personality and one's changeless spiritual being, one's essential self and one's expressional or instrumental self. And once this distinction is definitely made, one has to discover one's essential Self and live in it, unaffected by the mutations of the instrumental self. The essential Self is, as the Gita puts it, unborn and permanent and eternal, the ancient of days, indestructible even in the destruction of the body; and to live in this Self is to be immortal.

The way to the recovery and realisation of this essential Self of man lies through a renunciation of all egoistic desires and attachments, physical, vital and mental, and a shifting of the habitual poise on the surface to a new poise in the depths of the being. With a clear perception of the impermanence of the outer personality, we must identify ourselves with that luminous centre in us round which our expressional personality develops and functions

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and disintegrates and grows again. By love and aspiration, by concentration and meditation, by renunciation and detachment, by an unflagging labour of self-discipline and self-mastery, we must liberate ourselves from the fetters of our constructed self and unite with our soul or timeless Self. There is an almost complete unanimity among the religions and the schools of yoga in regard to the basic method of self-realisation, though some of them consider this realisation, and the others do not, as the highest aim of spiritual life and the crown of human achievement.

"The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother" throws considerable light on this path and provides ample sustenance to this category of spiritual seekers. It inculcates the right spirit of meditation and contemplation, teaches the most effective way of introspection and self-discipline, and imparts a vivid sense of the peace and patience without which no spiritual endeavour can bear any abiding fruit. Regarding the danger of the material thoughts obsessing the minds of those who aspire to realise their Self and attain a perfect self-conquest, it says, "The tide of material thoughts lies always in wait for the least weakness, and if we relax our vigilance even for a moment, if we are negligent, to however small an extent, it rushes forward and invades us from all sides, submerging sometimes under its heavy flood the result of innumerable efforts. Then the being enters into a sort of torpor, its physical needs of food and sleep increase, its intelligence is obscured, its inner vision is veiled, and in spite of its feeling little real interest in these superficial activities, they occupy it almost exclusively. This condition is very troublesome and fatiguing, for nothing is more fatiguing than thoughts about material things, and the wearied mind suffers like a caged bird unable to spread its wings, yet aspiring for the power to take its free flight."¹

It is not enough for the aspirants of self-conquest to remain concentrated on the soul and leave the outer nature to its obscure movements; for, unless the nature is sufficiently purified and quieted, it will be difficult for them even to meditate with any sustained concentration,—the turmoil of the unregenerate nature will drag their consciousness out, or even prevent its going within. The difficulties of the nature have to be faced with a calm courage and conquered. They have to be carefully and vigilantly watched, and not to be treated lightly or indifferently; for, introspection will reveal to us that most of the difficulties we meet with in spiritual life come from

¹ Prayers and Meditations of the Mother—Jan. 4, 1914

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within and not from without. "It is in oneself that there are all the obstacles, it is in oneself that there are all the difficulties, it is in oneself that there is all the darkness and ignorance."¹ The *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother* abounds in such invaluable instructions for those who aim at self-conquest.

The second category of spiritual seekers consists of those who seek the Divine. These seekers feel that self-conquest is not the highest attainment, but only the first decisive step. The lower, empirical self has, indeed, to be conquered and the essential Self has to be realised, for that is man's real Self; but until the Divine is realised, the fundamental unity of existence cannot be experienced, and the world remains unexplained and unpossessed. An irrepressible aspiration for the Being of our being, a consuming thirst for the bliss of His embrace, impels these seekers beyond self-conquest. They cannot rest content with the peace and silence of the soul or even its beatific freedom; they feel within them what the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* calls "the naked intent stretching into God." It is a mystic faith and mysterious longing that cannot be quenched by any spiritual experience, short of a total union with the Divine. By the way of knowledge or devotion or service, or by a combination of them all, they advance towards the Supreme Being and strive to unite with Him. Personal salvation appears to them, not as an end to be pursued, but as a state attainable by the Grace of God and utilisable as a stable basis for the enjoyment of divine union. For, he, who is subject to the mechanism of the lower nature, cannot certainly qualify for the bliss of the divine union. It is, in fact, the liberated soul or the psychic being alone that can seek the Divine with an inextinguishable passion; the mind and the life parts of man are much too attached to the appearances and surface realities of existence to conceive of themselves such a self-denying aspiration. When the soul is awakened and turned, not towards the immutable Impersonal, but towards the Divine, it evinces a one-pointed devotion for Him and an intense aspiration for a union with Him. For it, the world exists only in and for the Divine, and all the relations of life appear but as ways and means of communing with Him. Its constant cry is, "I desire not that which comes from Thee, but only I desire Thee, O sweetest Love!"²

In the *Mother's Prayers and Meditations* there are numerous expressions

¹ *Prayers and Meditation of the Mother*—March 1, 1914

² St. Catherine of Genoa.

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of this all-consuming hunger for the Supreme. Indeed, there is not a single Prayer in which this hunger, this flaming aspiration, this transforming passion does not break out in a splendour of rapturous accents.

"O Thou, who art the sole reality of our being, O sublime Master of love, Redeemer of life, let me have no longer any other consciousness than of Thee at every instant and in each being. When I do not live solely with Thy life, I agonise, I sink slowly towards extinction; for Thou art my only reason for existence, my one goal, my single support..."¹

"O Lord, my mind drawn inward and my heart at peace, I approach Thee and all my being is filled with Thy divine Presence; grant that I may see only Thee in everything and that all may shine with Thy divine Light."²

This aspiration finds perhaps its sublimest expression in the Prayer of May 2, 1914:

"Beyond all human conceptions, even the most marvellous, beyond all human feelings, even the most sublime, beyond the most magnificent aspirations and the purest elans, beyond Love, Knowledge and the Unity of the Being, I would enter into a constant communion with Thee, O Lord. Free from all trammels, I shall be Thyself; it will be Thou seeing the world through this body; it will be Thou acting in the world through this instrument.

"In me is the calm serenity of perfect certitude."

As one reads these Prayers, one feels swept into an inexpressible state of spiritual exaltation in which one's whole being thrills with a luminous ecstasy. As if liberated from all bondage of the world, one seems to love and long for nothing but the Divine, the Eternal, who is experienced as the sole Reality of all existence. The intensity of aspiration that the Prayers breathe and the absoluteness of surrender that they mirror have a rare magnetic force that defies all comparison and analysis,—they are an irresistible spiritual infection. One feels like crying out with the Mother, "I would conquer Thee whatever may be the effort necessary for that...." And yet the Prayers contain something more.

The third and last category of spiritual seekers is composed of those who have found the Divine, but who yet "aspire to consecrate themselves more

¹ Jan. 24, 1914

² April 8, 1914

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and more to the Divine Work." This is a very slender category, hewing its way to the realisation of its aim through an almost virgin field. The spiritual traditions of the past are mostly woven round the ideal of personal salvation or that of an absorbed union with the Divine in the nuptial chamber of the human heart, or of a traceless self-annulment in the Impersonal; they throw very little light on this difficult path of the Divine work. It is true that names like those of Janaka and Ajatashatru stand out in the history or prehistory of spiritual achievements as shining examples of an attempt at the reconciliation of Spirit and Matter, but what was really achieved was a strenuous adjustment and accommodation between the two polar principles, rather than a triumphant fusion and union for a perfect manifestation of the Divine on earth. The Divine Work that the Mother speaks of is a different thing altogether, and a far greater, if much more difficult, attainment. It is a revelatory or manifestational work demanding for its perfection, not only a union with the Divine in the depths of the being, but a constant and dynamic union even in the outer nature. It is not the product of a mere combination of Mary and Martha, the static and the dynamic principles of the Spirit, as we find brilliantly illustrated in the lives of some of the Western mystics, like St Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Genoa etc., who represent remarkable achievements of the theopathic life. Higher than personal salvation, greater even than the ineffable bliss of the absorbed divine union and more luminously creative and transformative than the mere combination of the static and the active principles of the soul, is the Divine Work the Mother holds up before us as the highest fulfilment of the liberated soul living in the Divine. It is a spontaneous fruition in man of the Divine Will to a victorious perfection in self-manifestation.

This category of spiritual seekers may be called Ishwarkoti, in the sense in which Sri Ramakrishna used the word, but with an important difference. They not only serve the Divine while living in Him, but they serve to manifest Him. This manifestation is the Divine Work, which presupposes the liberation and transformation, or, to be more precise, divinisation of the human nature itself. And it entails a considerable labour of purifying and converting each part of the being, even the gross material. The Divine Work cannot be carried out to perfection unless human nature has been converted into the Supernature or Para Prakriti.

The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother can be called a pealing anthem of the progress of the Divine Work. The key-note of the Mother's

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aspiration is struck in the second Prayer of the book, dated the 3rd Nov. 1912:

"Thy Light is in me like a vivifying fire and Thy divine Love penetrates me: I aspire with all my being that Thou mayest reign as sovereign Lord in this body whose will is to become Thy docile instrument and Thy faithful servant."

This aspiration of the Mother is not that of a mere karmayogi or even of a God-drunk mystic seeking to serve the Divine by philanthropic or altruistic work, or to be moved by the divine Will as far as his human nature and the conditions of his life permit it. The Divine Work has at once a subjective and an objective aspect, involving the unveiling of the Supreme in oneself, that is to say, in one's soul and in one's triple nature of mind, life and body, by the complete extinction of the separative ego; and it cannot be accomplished except by a radical transformation of the whole nature. When the triple nature has become a transparent and plastic channel, the divine splendour floods the whole being and flows out to regenerate the world. In this great work of transfiguration, it is the body that offers the most stubborn resistance. Its grossness refuses to be refined and subtilised; its ready susceptibility to disease and decrepitude and death seems to persist ad infinitum. Since the days of the ancient mystic cults, no serious and sustained attempt has been made to transform the human body; it has rather been spurned as "the frail flesh" and deliberately neglected, if not always mortified. But it is an indispensable means of the Divine Work which the Mother envisages as the highest goal of human life. How then can it be transformed? How can its consolidated grossness and its unyielding resistance disappear, giving place to a pellucid suppleness and a smiling docility? That which alone can break this resistance and effect a radical transmutation of the physical being is the highest Truth-Light and Truth-Force of the supreme creative Consciousness, *vijnanajyoti* and *vijnanashakti*. The descent of this Truth-Light and Truth-Force is, therefore, the first and most important condition of the Divine Work, and the complete transfiguration of the physical consciousness and the body its final preparation. That is why, in the Prayer quoted above, the Mother speaks of the body's will, as if it were an index to the achievement aspired for. If the physical being fails to reveal the light and love and beauty of the Divine, the manifestation can never be perfect, however great and glorious it may be in the depths of the being.

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The Divine Work, as the Mother understands it, stems out of the plenitude of the divine union,—union in the soul, union in the mind, union in the heart, union in life and the will, and union in the very cells of the body. The Divine Work is, indeed, the Divine's own work, that is to say, the Work done by the Divine Himself through the surrendered and transformed human being. It is this Divine Work that gives the ultimate sense and significance to human life. And, besides, the divine union will not be divinely complete without reproducing itself in the human body in the form of the Divine Work. The Divine Work is the offspring of a dynamic union between the Divine and the human soul. It is a fruition of union, as some of the Western mystics describe it. But, we must remember, it is a fruition pregnant with an evolutionary meaning and a teleological purpose. And a perfection in this fruition is the secret sense of the un-resting elan of universal life. Life yearns to become a Niagara of Light, and man a moving image of Eternity upon earth.

We can have some idea of the process and perfection of the Divine Work if we just study some of the utterances of the Mother in the Prayers and Meditations. Almost at the beginning of the book, the Mother says in her Prayer of Nov. 19, 1912, that she has "definitively found Thee (the Divine), and that the union was constant." The word she uses is "definitively", and not "definitely". She means to say that there can be no lapse from this union, which is final and secure—it is a fait accompli. And in many a subsequent Prayer she speaks of the fullness of her union and communion with the Divine. "Lord, Thou hast answered my prayer; Thou hast granted me what I have asked from Thee; the "I" has disappeared... Thou hast taken my life and made it Thine; Thou hast taken my will and hast united it to Thine; Thou hast taken my love and identified it with Thine; Thou hast taken my thought and replaced it by Thy absolute Consciousness." And yet, in the same breath, she speaks of the resistance of Matter and the distance that separates her from the integral union she aspired to realise. Even after the "definitive and constant" union, she says that "this state of union is poor and precarious compared with that which it will be possible for me to realise tomorrow." The paradox is resolved if we remember what the Mother says in several of her Prayers, that the Divine Work can be perfectly accomplished only when the divine union has become integral, that is to say, complete and constant from the remotest depths and heights of the being to its outermost peripheries. She describes or rather transcribes in the Prayers the various stages of trans-

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Psychology and Art of Education, by Dr. T. V. S. Rao, Publication of the International Institute of Practical Psychology and Mental Hygiene, Madras. pp. XX plus 419 (with many illustrations and diagrams), price Rs. 7/-

The book is a most comprehensive writing on the subject of education. It is also the publication of an Institute devoted to an ideal and is the embodiment of the life experience of a person, who is the Institute's director and evidently a faithful servant of the ideal. The International Institute of Practical Psychology and Mental Hygiene seems to have been inspired by a perception and faith in the psychological way of considering and handling human life and its relations. A very true perception indeed! How could a physical and objective-material way of treating man be satisfactory! Man is essentially as he lives within himself; and the conditions of this living naturally determine his well-being. His springs of action too are within him. The psychological approach to understand him and to modify his life and raise its level of well-being is evidently the most rational way and we most heartily welcome the formation of this Institute and wish it all success. Its aims too are very comprehensive. In a general way, it seeks "to deal with, from the psychological point of view, the problems of individual and social life, the problems of national and international relations and the problems of unity, peace and goodwill among the people of India and in the world around us." (p. 387) In a more detailed way it seeks to bring together psychologists from the west and the east for obtaining a fuller psychological light on practically all problems affecting human life. These problems include training for national service, leadership, business, child upbringing, spiritual and religious life, non-violence, art-creation, and the like.

The Institute has, indeed, a very ambitious outlook and programme. But the indispensability of the psychological point of view regarding problems of human life, which the Institute represents is a truth

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we heartily endorse. The science of psychology is essentially the science of the future. A fuller and a truer understanding of the human personality and of the dynamics of its action and change will obviously be the new knowledge with which a really better world could be created. However, we cannot forget that western psychology is as yet a very young science and that its knowledge of personality is still very inadequate. We have so far barely observed that personality is unique, but we do not know the conditions and the cause of this wonderful quality. And the creative process and the genius are yet enigmas. Without them our knowledge of personality is reduced to a description and classification of the superficial reactions. We cannot, therefore, too confidently insist on our western knowledge of human personality and seek to apply it to our problems. Therefore, while pursuing the psychological approach, we have constantly to seek to increase our psychological insight into personality. And in this connection the various systems of yoga of the east, which carried on such relentless introspection, can contribute substantially to the widening and deepening of our knowledge of personality. This knowledge, when acquired, will help to create the maturer psychology of tomorrow, which will be relatively surer of its field and subject-matter.

In pursuance of the psychological viewpoint espoused by the Institute, the author has very rightly sought to base his education on psychology. About one-fourth the book is devoted to a treatment of the "Functions of the Mind and Their Development." This is a purely psychological account and serves, indeed, as a very useful basis for a discussion and valuation of the problems of "Knowledge", "Teaching Methods", "Discipline", "School Organisation and Curriculum", and "Recent Educational Experiments and Plans in Free India". This psychological portion is a very good summary of the best of the western psychology. It avoids extremist positions and takes, on the whole, a synthetic view. Mind is considered an 'organism', "a form of life which grows and develops by its own inherent activity." The self-activity of the pupil thus becomes a basic psychological truth. The older education took the child's mind as a sort of wax or clay, which was to be moulded by the teacher. This view of the mind our author very rightly rejects. Mental development is a progressive "adjustment to environment." The author elaborates, "The more numerous and the more precise the similarities and the differences noticed, and the more orderly and systematic the combinations made among the sensations, the pleasure-pains and the impulses,—the more comprehensive are the ideas,—the loftier

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the emotions, and the nobler are the resolutions and acts." (p. 18) The unconscious and the process of repression too are duly recognised and rightly assessed for education.

Now all this is very good and if the present reviewer had not interested himself in Indian Psychology and, in particular, the psychological principles of Sri Aurobindo's system of Integral Yoga, he would have considered it a very fine psychological foundation for an educational scheme and system, whether in India or elsewhere. But he has progressively attained to a view that personality is not all a matter of adjustments to the environment. It is something in itself. To Indian psychology, it has been the soul, an in-itself conscious principle, which is the individuality of the person, and the mind a form of consciousness, *Bahirmukha*, outward-turned, which is an instrumentation for external action and relations. Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is a practical discipline, which enables an individual to make an experience of the inner principle of existence and appreciate the true nature and function of the normal mind. Among the western psychologists too, C.G. Jung by a variety of ways has been led to affirm a 'centre' in personality. He says, "If we survey the situation as a whole, we come to the inevitable conclusion—at least in my opinion—that a psychic element is present that expresses itself through the tetrad. This conclusion demands neither daring speculation nor extravagant phantasy. If I have called the centre the 'self', I did so after ripe reflection and a careful assessment of the data of experience as well as of history."¹

Now if a soul, an in-itself conscious principle, is the central governing fact of personality and the mind a particular instrumentation of it like the senses and the limbs, then education will have to be differently oriented. A cultivation of the senses and a regulation of external relations and reactions will yet have to be attended to but the main purpose of education will have to be an activation and manifestation of the inner soul of man, a bringing into play of its inherent light, its integral will and its finer emotion of self-existent delight and love.

An education that does not know the qualities of soul-experience struggles in vain to achieve the highest qualities of character and personality. Madam Montessori, for instance, seeks to evolve a personality that will be "the master of the circumstances." She has obviously seen the true need of the times with the eye of a genius. Man is not the master of his circumstances and he should be so. But if he is in his nature only a correlative factor

¹ The Integration of the Personality, p. 198.

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of environment and his development consists in just a better organisation of his reactions to the environment, then how can we possibly expect that through education he could become a master of his circumstances. The whole of scientific civilisation of today is unfortunately working under this illusion. While evidently seeking to become master of nature, we are getting enslaved to it. Nature, its laws and the technological inventions based on them govern us by their necessities. We cannot free ourselves from these necessities, put a limit to the influence of science or direct it to other ends we might choose for it. But the fault is not of science or of scientific progress. The fact is that mind in its nature is a system of correlations and correlativities. It is enmeshed and caught up in its relations with external nature. It is not a free agent. If we could release into life the qualities of soul-experience, the same science and scientific civilisation will assume a new form. The soul is a self-existent principle of personality and it is through the development and expression of it in life that the quality of masterliness can be achieved. Madam Montessori seeks masterliness and so does education generally. But how can this true vision become a fact without the necessary perception of that which is by its nature free in us and which by its expression and manifestation can create a large space of freedom around us.

Indian education, in particular, cannot afford to ignore this essential truth of personality. The best traditions of Indian education bear it out even today and our author is fully aware of them. His appraisals of teaching methods and other educational issues reveal an appreciation of many spiritual truths of human life, which have afforded us a special satisfaction.

The author's treatment of the problem of discipline is particularly illuminating. Discipline is indeed "that orderliness whose essence is self-control....It concerns itself with child development, with the formation of character. It teaches the child what to love and what to avoid. It lays the foundations of self-inspection and self-control" (p. 177). And in connection with the method a teacher may employ for encouraging the spirit of discipline, the author says, "It should always be borne in mind that, whatever be the method he adopts, the teacher should always try to secure the confidence and affection of his pupils. There is no light without love." (p. 192)

The last part of the book, dealing with the recent educational experiments and plans in Free India, is particularly happy reading. It gives at one place the various original and creative attempts made here in the field of education.

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We learn of the educational vision of Tagore and its realisation in Vishwa-Bharati, of Jamia Millia and the devotion and dedication of Dr. Zakir Husain, of the Besant Theosophical School and the Kalakshetra and the vision and work of Dr. Arundale and Shrimati Rukmini Devi and in the end of the Basic Educational Scheme of Wardha. The Sargent Scheme as a bold attempt to tackle the national education of the country also comes for a consideration along with the above indigenous creations. It is most delightful to see the rich creative elements of these efforts and, in particular, notice how the 'Forest School' idea of ancient India has inspired and moved modern Indian-educationists.

The author's personal emphasis is on Basic Education and he expects it to serve as a successful national educational scheme for India. He is, however, also conscious of certain inadequacies of the system. He feels that a better appreciation of the "Principles of Basic Psychology" is needed among the teachers. Surely we must seek to found ourselves on a growing knowledge of the psychology of the particular educational system as also of human personality as a whole and that will be the best assurance of the continuance of the creative element in our work. The growth of personality and in personality the growth of its creative part, the conscious soul, is obviously the most important thing and a system will have to prove its worth by its ability to stimulate and bring into action that part. The principle of learning by doing is to us the essential truth of Basic Education. It is undoubtedly sound psychology of childhood and boyhood. But the nature of inner impulse to learn by doing should determine what a boy will do. If an occupation is not chosen by the impulse, it will not be able to afford the food it should for the inner impulse to grow. Above all, the national education of India should be able to recognise the soul in man and help in the growth and expression of this central truth of personality through its teaching, organisation and entire atmosphere. Without this we will be in daily practice denying the first basic truth of life, and *with this* we could easily evolve the high ideals of 'unity, peace and goodwill' and realise the quality of personality, which all education so deeply cherishes today.

We warmly recommend the book to all teachers and lovers of education and assure them of a wide information on psychology and the varied issues of educational theory and practice.

INDRA SEN

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Among human beings, the most widely spread disease is mental narrowness. They understand only what is in their own consciousness and cannot tolerate anything else.

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November 1953

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To believe or not to believe in the possibility of avatarhood can make no difference to the bare fact. If God chooses to manifest in a human body I do not see how any human thought, approval or disapproval can affect in the least His decision; and if He takes birth in a body, the denial of men cannot prevent the fact from being a fact, and if He decides not to incarnate in a human body, the faith, certitude and belief of all humanity cannot in the least alter the fact that He is not incarnate. So I do not see what is there to get excited about. It is only in perfect quietness and silence, free from all prejudices and preferences, that the consciousness can perceive the truth.

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

MUSIC—ITS ORIGIN AND NATURE

MUSIC, you must remember, like any other art, is a means for expressing something—some idea, some feeling, some emotion, a certain aspiration and so on. There is even a domain where all these movements exist and from where they are brought down under a musical form. A good composer with some inspiration would produce good music; he is then called a good musician. A bad musician can have also a good inspiration, he can receive something from the higher domain, but possessing no musical capacity, he would produce only what is very commonplace, very ordinary and uninteresting. However, if you go beyond, precisely over to this place where lies the origin of music, get to the idea, the emotion, the inspiration behind, you can then taste of these things without being stopped by the form. Still this musical form can be joined on to what is behind or beyond the form; for it is that which originally inspired

* Based on Talks of the Mother

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the musician to compose. Of course, there are instances where no inspiration exists, where the source is only a kind of sound mechanics, which is not, in any case, always interesting. What I mean is this that there is an inner state in which the outer form is not the most important thing: there lies the origin of music, the inspiration that is beyond. It is trite to say, but one often forgets that it is not sound that makes music, the sound has to express something.

There is a music that is quite mechanical and has no inspiration. There are musicians who play with great virtuosity, that is to say, they have mastered the technique and execute faultlessly the most complicated and rapid movements. It is music perhaps, but it expresses nothing; it is like a machine. It is clever, there is much skill, but it is uninteresting, soulless. The most important thing, not only in music, but in all human creations, in all that man does even, is, I repeat, the inspiration behind. The execution naturally is expected to be on a par with the inspiration; but to express truly well, one must have truly great things to express. It is not to say that technique is not necessary; on the contrary, one must possess a very good technique; it is even indispensable. Only it is not the one thing indispensable, nor is it as important as the inspiration. For the essential quality of music comes from the region where it has its source.

Source or origin means the thing without which an object would not exist. Nothing can manifest upon earth physically unless it has its source in a higher truth. Thus material existence has its source and inspiration in the vital, the vital in its turn has behind it the mental, the mental has the overmental and so on. If the universe were a flat object, having its origin in itself, it would quickly cease to exist. (That is perhaps what Science means when it postulates the impossibility of perpetual motion). It is because there is a higher source which inspires it, a secret energy that drives it towards manifestation that Life continues; otherwise it would exhaust itself very soon.

There is a graded scale in the source of music. A whole category of music is there that comes from the higher vital, for example: it is very catching, perhaps even a little vulgar, something that twines round your nerves, as it were, and twists them. It catches you somewhere about your loins—navel centre—and charms you in its way. As there is a vital music there is also what can be called psychic music coming from quite a different source; there is further a music which has spiritual origin. In its own region this higher music is very magnificent; it seizes you deeply and carries

MUSIC—ITS ORIGIN AND NATURE

you away somewhere else. But if you were to express it perfectly—execute it—you would have to pass this music too through the vital. Your music coming from high may nevertheless fall absolutely flat in the execution, if you do not have that intensity of vital vibration which alone can give it its power and splendour. I knew people who had very high inspiration, but their music turned to be quite commonplace, because their vital did not move. Their spiritual practice put their vital almost completely to sleep; yes, it was literally asleep and did not work at all. Their music thus came straight into the physical. If you could get behind and catch the source, you would see that there was really something marvellous even there, although externally it was not forceful or effective. What came out was a poor little melody, very thin, having nothing of the power of harmony which is there when one can bring into play the vital energy. If one could put all this power of vibration that belongs to the vital into the music of higher origin we would have the music of a genius. Indeed, for music and for all artistic creation, in fact, for literature, for poetry, for painting etc. an intermediary is needed. Whatever one does in these domains depends doubtless for its intrinsic value upon the source of the inspiration, upon the plane or the height where one stands. But the value of the execution depends upon the strength of the vital that expresses the inspiration. For a complete genius both are necessary. The combination is rare, generally it is the one or the other, more often it is the vital that predominates and overshadows.

When the vital only is there, you have the music of *café concert* and cinema. It is extraordinarily clever and at the same time extraordinarily commonplace, even vulgar. Since, however, it is so clever, it catches hold of your brain, haunts your memory, rings in (or wrings) your nerves; it becomes so difficult to get rid of its influence, precisely because it is done so well, so cleverly. It is made vitally with vital vibrations, but what is behind is not, to say the least, wholesome. Now imagine the same vital power of expression joined to the inspiration coming from above, say, the highest possible inspiration when the entire heaven seems to open out, then it is music indeed! Some things in César Franck, some in Beethoven, some in Bach, some in some others possess this sovereignty. But after all it is only a moment, it comes for a moment and does not abide. There is no artist whose whole work is executed at such a pitch. The inspiration comes like a flash of lightning, most often it lasts just long enough to be grasped and held in a few snatches.

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Something similar to that experience may happen to you when your consciousness is all attentive and concentrated; you feel suddenly that you are being carried aloft, that all your energies are gathered and lifted up, as if your head has opened out and you are thrown into the free air, into the far spaces of extraordinary heights and magnificent lights. The experience gives you in a few seconds what one may in the normal course of things achieve after many years of difficult yoga. Only immediately after the experience you drop down below upon the earth, because the basis has not been built; even you may begin to doubt whether you had really the experience. Still the consciousness has been prepared, something definitive has been done and remains.

INDIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSIC

The difference is both in regard to the source and the expression and in an inverse way. In European music a very high—spiritual—inspiration is a rare thing. The psychic source also is very rare. But if at all it is a very high spiritual source or otherwise it is the vital that is the source. The expression is always there, apart from some exceptions naturally; but it is almost always vital, because the source is very often purely vital. At times, as I said, it comes from high above, then it is really marvellous. At times, more rarely, it is psychic: something of it was in the religious music, but it is not frequent. Indian music, on the other hand, almost always, that is to say, when we have good musicians, has a psychic source, the source, for example, of the Ragas. It does not come from the top heights, it has rather an inner and intimate origin. But it has very rarely a sufficient vital body. I have heard a good deal of Indian music, quite a good deal indeed. I came across very rarely any that has a great vital force, not more than four or five times. But I have heard oftener that with a psychic inspiration behind. It is a music directly translated from the inner into the physical. To listen you must concentrate, as it is something very thin, very fine and tenuous, having nothing of the vital vibration with its strong intense resonances. You can glide into it, let yourself be carried along the flow, entering the psychic source. It has that effect, it acts something like an intoxication, something that takes you into a kind of trance. If you listen well and are attentive and let yourself go, you slowly glide and dip, dip into the psychic consciousness; but if you remain in the external consciousness, such a thin stream expresses itself there that the vital gives no

THIS UGLINESS IN THE WORLD

response and finds it extremely flat and monotonous. If, however, along with the psychic vibration there were also a vital force expressing it, the result would be interesting indeed.

I like this kind of music, with a theme, a single theme moving and developing gradually with variations: countless variations playing out the same constant theme, variations branching out and coming back again to the original basic theme. In Europe too there was something of the kind in its otherwise very different style. Bach had it, Mozart too. In modern times some musicians like Debussy, Ravel and the Russian Borodine and a few others have caught something of it. You take a certain number of notes, in a certain relation and upon that scheme you play variations, almost an infinite number of variations. It is marvellous: it takes you deep inside and, if you are ready, gives you the consciousness of the psychic, something that draws you back from the external physical consciousness and connects you with something elsewhere within.

THIS UGLINESS IN THE WORLD

Everything in the world has at its source a supreme truth, how is it then that the world has become ugly in its expression? Why are things at all ugly? Because there are other things that intervene between the Source and the manifestation. For example, if I asked you: "do you know your true being"? what would you say? You do not know; it would be wonderful if you did. It is the same with all beings and things. And yet you are already a sufficiently developed being, a thinking being, and have gone through many stages of refinement; you are not quite the lizard walking on the wall! Still you cannot tell what is the truth of your being. That is the secret of the deformation in the world. It is because there is all the unconsciousness—the Inconscient—that has been created by the fact of separation from one's origin. It is this inconscience which prevents the Source from manifesting in its own nature, although it is there always. It is there, therefore all things exist, the world exists; but in its expression it is deformed, because it has to manifest itself through inconscience, through ignorance and obscurity. But how did it come about? The will to create was originally a will that projected itself towards individual formation; what it arrived at, however, was not the true individual (or individualisa-

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tion) but a breaking up of the solid unity into infinitesimal fragments. The original indivisible unity became a sum of infinitely divided unities. These unities or units were individualisations of things separate and feeling and acting as such. It is precisely the feeling of separation from others that gives you the impression that you are an individual. Otherwise you would feel that you were only a fluid mass. That is to say, you are no longer conscious simply of your rigid outer form and all that cuts you off from others and makes of you a separate individual, you are conscious of the vital forces that move about everywhere, of the unconscious that is the foundation of all, you have the impression that you are a moving mass with all kinds of contradictory movements in it, which cannot be separated from each other. You would not have the impression that you are an individual being, but that you are something like one note or vibration in a whole complex. The original will was to form individual beings capable of becoming conscious again of their divine origin. This process of individualisation created the necessity that to be an individual one must feel oneself separate: that is why one is cut off from the original consciousness, at least apparently, and is fallen into inconscience. For the Life of life is the Origin alone and if it is separated from that source, consciousness naturally turns into unconsciousness and you lose trace of the truth of your being. That is the process of the creation or formation of the world by which the pure origin does not manifest directly in its essence and purity, but through deformation, that is to say, unconsciousness and ignorance. That is how ugliness came in, death and disease, wickedness and misery and all. It is the movement, I say, brought in by the necessity of individual formation that has produced these things, each and every one of them, that is the one source of the multiple evil in all its modes and vibrations. I do not say this was indispensable—that problem I may take up later on. But for the moment I direct you to the source in order to show the remedy. And there is no point in questioning why it is so. As I said, the only way to settle the world problem is to be conscious again, to recover the lost consciousness. Of course, if you say like some religions that good is good and evil evil and they will always remain so, then there is no longer any problem. An eternal struggle binds the two together and whichever wins for the moment will make the world a little better at one moment and a little worse at another. But the two exist, continue to exist eternally and indissolubly intertwined. But you have seen it is not like that; one can come out of the tangle into the perfect unity of the truth, for it is that which is the only and original source.

THE DIVINE TRUTH—ITS NAME AND FORM

It is this perfect truth, let me repeat, that has scattered itself abroad, into these innumerable little atoms, into these insignificant brain cells which, in spite of all their ignorance, are still moved by a secret stir of consciousness: these little specks of darkness reach out towards light which they can find, for it is within them. They will arrive at what they seek. It may take time more or less, but they will reach in the end. That is then the remedy: it lies in the very heart of evil itself.

THE DIVINE TRUTH—ITS NAME AND FORM

The divine truth at the heart of things, people have called by all kinds of names, every one presenting it from his own angle of experience. But always it is the one Reality. There are millions of ways leading towards it; but one thing is certain, you can find it, whatever the way you follow, whatever the form you give it: the result is the same, the final experience is identical. If all have touched the thing, they touch the same thing always. And the proof that they have touched the thing is that it is the same for all; if it is not the same thing, then they have not touched it. You can give it any name you like: a name is only a word.

What is the value of a word, after all? Have you not noticed that there are people who do not understand you, however clearly you speak to them. There are others again who understand you if you utter only two words. The external form—the sound of a word—has a meaning, if there is a force of thought behind; the greater the force of thought, the more powerful and precise and clear it is, the greater the chance of people receiving the force and understanding the word that carries the force. But if someone speaks without thinking, usually it is impossible to understand him; he would seem to you to make only a noise. You must have noticed also that people who have lived together and are habituated to each other's thought and talk, do not require any definition of the words they use or even a large use to understand each other. There has been a mental adjustment and the words are only an excuse for the inner contact, the contact between brain and brain which underlies or even precedes the words. But when you meet a new person, it takes you time to adapt and adjust yourself to understand the words he uses.

It is the meaning, the thought behind the word that is important. When the thought is powerfully thought, it produces a vibration of which the word is only a carrier, an intermediary. Indeed, you can develop the thought-

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power to such an extent that you are able to establish a direct material contact with the minimum or even no words at all. Naturally this requires a strong power of concentration. But you will find that the bodily mechanism is only a mechanical means; it is an instrument, but not always important or indispensable.

When we are conscious of the Divine, do we see Him in all things in some particular form?

You expect to see a divine form in each and all things? It may happen so. But I am not sure; I have the impression that there is a large part of imagination in such experiences. You may, for example, see the form of Krishna or Christ or Buddha in every being or thing. But I say that much of human conception enters into this perception. Otherwise what I was telling you just now would not be true. I said all who have the consciousness of the Divine, all who get the contact with the Divine, wherever one may be, to whatever age or country he may belong, all have the same essential experience. If it were not so, the Hindus would always see one of their gods, the Europeans one of theirs, the Japanese a third variety and so on. This may be an addition of each one's own mental formation, but it would not be the Reality in its essence or purity which is beyond all form. One can have a perception of the Divine Presence, a very concrete perception, one can have even a personal contact with the Divine, but it need not happen in and through the kind of form you imagine; it is something inexpressible, beyond all explanation or definition, it is evident only to one who has the experience. It may be as you are suddenly lifted up into a peculiar condition, you find yourself in the presence of the Divine which takes a form familiar to you, a form you have been accustomed to associate with the Divine, because of your education, your upbringing and tradition. But, as I say, it is not the supreme essence of the experience: the form gives after all a limitation to the experience, takes away from it its universality and a large measure of its power.

27-5-1953

THE DEATH OF A GOD

THE East voices:

Arise now, tread out the fire!

Scatter the ashes of a God through the stars.

Forget to hope and aspire.

Let us paint our prison, let us strengthen its bars.

Lo, now he is dead and the greatness that cumbered the world and

Time's ways

Has vanished like a golden shadow thrust out from the anguish of
the ages;

The glory and burden, the sunlight and the passion have left our days;

Once more we can wear the grey livery of Death and gather in his wages.

All that drew back from his splendour, fleeing as ashamed from the light
and the beauty and invincible sweetness

Now returns vaunting this darkness and littleness, this fret of life's fever,
its cruel and sad incompleteness.

SRI AUROBINDO

HYMN TO INDRA*

1. Thee the Gayatrins¹ chant, the Arkins² begin their action; the mind movements, O Shatakratu, strive up by thee as they that climb a trunk.

2. When one climbeth from plateau to plateau, a rich activity expresses itself, then Indra bringeth the substance of thought into consciousness, he moves a lover³ with his mate.⁴

3. Yoke thou thy maned steeds, covering with mastery fill the containing soul, then, O Indra, drinker of the nectar, respond with the Sruti to our words.

4. Come, vibrate⁵ to our songs of praise, speak them out as they rise, cry out thy response; attach thyself to our mind, O King, O Indra, and increase in us the Yajna.

5. I form fully the prayer I have to declare towards Indra, the prayer that giveth increase, that potent Indra may have ecstasy in our nectar-yieldings and in our friendlinesses⁶.

6. Him we desire in comradeship, him in delight, him in strong energy; therefore this puissant Indra in his kindliness hath power to give us his substance⁷.

7. O Indra, wide and untroubled⁸ success has been won, remove the veil⁹ over these rays, create delight, O dweller on the hill.

8. Over thee the two obstructing firmaments have no power when thou

* Rig Veda I. 10

Rishi: Madhucchandas

¹ Or, 'Devatas of mind'

² Also, 'Devatas of mind'

³ Or, 'master'

⁴ Or, 'vibrates with the force and mastery of his action'.

yūtha joining, mate, that to which one is yoked, also force, strength.

⁵ Or, 'answer'

⁶ Or, 'acts of friendship'

⁷ Or, 'hath power to distribute to us of his substance'.

⁸ Or, 'undarkened'

⁹ *vraj* doubtful—perhaps 'reveal the multitude of those rays'.

HYMN TO INDRA

goest stiffly upward¹; victorious pour down for us on our earths the waters of heaven.

9. Lend attentive ear and hear my call, now uphold² my words; O Indra, draw this my song of praise into Thy innermost part of the state of Yoga.

10. We know thee most supreme in the substantial strengths of being, a hearer of our call; because thou art thus supreme we call to thee for expansion of being strong in stability.

11. O Indra, of the sheaths, drink then the Soma, be steadfast in delight, give us wholly a new being and create for us the Knowledge that preserveth utterly our force.

12. O delighter in our words, may these our words be all around thee; may all increase follow the increase of our being and all love cling to it.

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YOGA is our union with some Being or some Reality, which is greater than ourselves or is our own greatest and real Self; it is That which by Yoga we join, enter into or become.

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¹ Or, 'when thou goest straight'

² Or, 'heed'

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

NEW SERIES

IF Art's service is but to imitate Nature, then burn all the picture galleries and let us have instead photographic studios. It is because Art reveals what Nature hides that a small picture is worth more than all the jewels of the millionaires and the treasures of the princes.

★

If you only imitate visible Nature, you will perpetrate either a corpse, a dead sketch or a monstrosity; Truth lives in that which goes behind and beyond the visible and sensible.

★

O Poet, O Artist, if thou but holdest up the mirror to Nature, thinkest thou Nature will rejoice in thy work? Rather she will turn away her face. For what dost thou hold up to her there? Herself? No, but a lifeless outline and reflection, a shadowy mimicry. It is the secret soul of Nature thou hast to seize, thou hast to hunt eternally after the truth in the external symbol, and that no mirror will hold for thee, nor for Her whom thou seekest.

★

I find in Shakespeare a far greater and more consistent universalist than the Greeks. All his creations are universal types from Lancelot Gobbo and his dog up to Lear and Hamlet.

★

The Greeks sought universality by omitting all finer individual touches; Shakespeare sought it more successfully by universalising the rarest individual details of character. That which Nature uses for concealing from us the Infinite, Shakespeare used for revealing the Anantaguna in man to the eye of humanity.

★

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

Shakespeare who invented the figure of holding up the mirror to Nature, was the one poet who never condescended to a copy, a photograph or a shadow. The reader who sees in Falstaff, Macbeth, Lear or Hamlet imitations of Nature, has either no inner eye of the soul or has been hypnotised by a formula.

★

Where in material Nature wilt thou find Falstaff, Macbeth or Lear? Shadows and hints of them she possesses, but they themselves tower above her.

★

There are two for whom there is hope, the man who has felt God's touch and been drawn to it and the sceptical seeker and self-convinced atheist; but for the formularists of all the religions and the parrots of free thought, they are dead souls who follow a death that they call living.

★

A man came to a scientist and wished to be instructed; this instructor showed him the revelations of the microscope and telescope, but the man laughed and said, "These are obviously hallucinations inflicted on the eye by the glass which you use as a medium; I will not believe till you show these wonders to my naked seeing". Then the scientist proved to him by many collateral facts and experiments the reliability of his knowledge but the man laughed again and said, "what you term proofs, I term coincidences, the number of coincidences does not constitute proof; as for your experiments, they are obviously effected under abnormal conditions and constitute a sort of insanity of Nature." When confronted with the results of mathematics, he was angry and cried out, "This is obviously imposture, gibberish and superstition; will you try to make me believe that these absurd cabalistic figures have any real force and meaning?" Then the scientist drove him out as a hopeless imbecile; for he did not recognise his own system of denials and his own method of negative reasoning. If we wish to refuse an impartial and open-minded enquiry, we can always find the most respectable polysyllables to cover our refusal or impose tests and conditions which stultify the inquiry.

★

THE ADVENT

When our minds are involved in matter, they think matter the only reality; when we draw back into immaterial consciousness, then we see matter a mask and feel existence in consciousness alone having the touch of reality. Which then of these two is the truth? Nay, God knoweth; but he who has had both experiences, can easily tell which condition is the more fertile in knowledge, the mightier and more blissful.

★

I believe immaterial consciousness to be truer than material consciousness. Because I know in the first what in the second is hidden from me and also can command what the mind knows in matter.

★

Hell and Heaven exist only in the soul's consciousness. Ay, but so does the earth and its lands and seas and fields and deserts and mountains and rivers. All world is nothing but arrangement of the Soul's seeing.

There is only one soul and one existence; therefore we all see one objectivity only; but there are many knots of mind and ego in the one soul-existence, therefore we all see the one Object in different lights and shadows.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE YOGA OF INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE*

CHAPTER I

THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

ALL spiritual seeking moves towards an object of Knowledge to which men ordinarily do not turn the eye of the mind, to someone or something Eternal, Infinite, Absolute that is not the temporal things or forces of which we are sensible, although he or it may be in them or behind them or their source or creator. It aims at a state of knowledge by which we can touch, enter or know by identity this Eternal, Infinite, and Absolute, a consciousness other than our ordinary consciousness of ideas and forms and things, a knowledge that is not what we call knowledge but something self-existent, ever-lasting, infinite. And although it may or even necessarily must, since man is a mental creature, start from our ordinary instruments of knowledge, yet it must as necessarily go beyond them and use supra-sensuous and supramental means and faculties, for it is in search of something that is itself supra-sensuous and supramental and beyond the grasp of the mind and senses, even if through mind and sense there can come a first glimpse of it or a reflected image.

The traditional systems, whatever their other differences, all proceed on the belief or the perception that the Eternal and Absolute can only be or at least can only inhabit a pure transcendent state of non-cosmic existence or else a non-existence. All cosmic existence or all that we call existence is a state of ignorance. Even the highest individual perfection, even the blissful cosmic condition is no better than a supreme ignorance. All that is individual, all that is cosmic has to be austere renounced by the seeker of the absolute Truth. The supreme quiescent Self or else the absolute Nihil is the sole Truth, the only object of spiritual knowledge. The state

Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter XIII (*Arya* Vol. II), *Revised*. The text in the *Arya* was considerably revised by Sri Aurobindo.

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of knowledge, the consciousness other than this temporal that we must attain is Nirvana, an extinction of ego, a cessation of all mental, vital and physical activities, of all activities whatsoever, a supreme illumined quiescence, the pure bliss of an impersonal tranquillity self-absorbed and ineffable. The means are meditation, concentration excluding all things else, a total loss of the mind in its object. Action is permissible only in the first stages of the search in order to purify the seeker and make him morally and temperamentally a fit vessel for the knowledge. Even this action must either be confined to the performance of the rites of worship and the prescribed duties of life rigorously ordained by the Hindu Shashtra or, as in the Buddhistic discipline, must be guided along the eightfold path to the supreme practice of the works of compassion which lead towards the practical annihilation of self in the good of others. In the end, in any severe and pure Jnanayoga, all works must be abandoned for an entire quiescence. Action may prepare salvation, it cannot give it. Any continued adherence to action is incompatible with the highest progress and may be an insuperable obstacle to the attainment of the spiritual goal. The supreme state of quiescence is the very opposite of action and cannot be attained by those who persist in works. And even devotion, love, worship are disciplines for the unripe soul, are at best the best methods of the Ignorance. For they are offered to something other, higher and greater than ourselves; but in the supreme knowledge there can be no such thing, since there is either only one self or no self at all and therefore either no one to do the worship and offer the love and devotion or no one to receive it. Even thought-activity must disappear in the sole consciousness of identity or of nothingness and by its own quiescence bring about the quiescence of the whole nature. The absolute Identical alone must remain or else the eternal Nihil.

This pure Jnanayoga comes by the intellect, although it ends in the transcendence of the intellect and its workings. The thinker in us separates himself from all the rest of what we phenomenally are, rejects the heart, draws back from the life and the senses, separates from the body that he may arrive at his own exclusive fulfilment in that which is beyond even himself and his function. There is a truth that underlies, as there is an experience that seems to justify, this attitude. There is an Essence that is in its nature a quiescence, a supreme of Silence in the Being that is beyond its own development and mutations, immutable and therefore superior to all activities of which it is at most a Witness. And in the hierarchy of our psychological functions the Thought is in a way nearest to this Self,

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nearest at least to its aspect of the all-conscious knower who regards all activities but can stand back from them all. The heart, will and other powers in us are fundamentally active, turn naturally towards action, find through it their fulfilment,—although they also may automatically arrive at a certain quiescence by fullness of satisfaction in their activities or else by a reverse process of exhaustion through perpetual disappointment and dissatisfaction. The thought too is an active power, but is more capable of arriving at quiescence by its own conscious choice and will. The thought is more easily content with the illumined intellectual perception of this silent Witness Self that is higher than all our activities and, that immobile spirit once seen, is ready, deeming its mission of truth-finding accomplished, to fall at rest and become itself immobile. For in its most characteristic movement it is itself apt to be a disinterested witness, judge, observer of things more than an eager participant and passionate labourer in the work and can arrive very readily at a spiritual or philosophic calm and detached aloofness. And since men are mental beings, thought, if not truly their best and highest, is at least their most constant, normal and effective means for enlightening their ignorance. Armed with its functions of gathering and reflection, meditation, fixed contemplation, the absorbed dwelling of the mind on its object, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana*, it stands at our tops as an indispensable aid to our realisation of that which we pursue, and it is not surprising that it should claim to be the leader of the journey and the only available guide or at least the direct and innermost door of the temple.

In reality thought is only a scout and pioneer; it can guide but not command or effectuate. The leader of the journey, the captain of the march, the first and most ancient priest of our sacrifice is the Will. This Will is not the wish of the heart or the demand or preference of the mind to which we often give the name. It is that inmost, dominant and often veiled conscious force of our being and of all being, *Tapas*, *Shakti*, *Sraddha*, that sovereignly determines our orientation and of which the intellect and the heart are more or less blind and automatic servants and instruments. The Self that is quiescent, at rest, vacant of things and happenings is a support and background to existence, a silent channel or a hypostasis of something Supreme: it is not itself the one entirely real existence, not itself the Supreme. The Eternal, the Supreme is the Lord and the all-originating Spirit. Superior to all activities and not bound by any of them, it is the source, sanctum, material, efficient power, master of all activities. All activities

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proceed from this supreme Self and are determined by it; all are its operations, processes of its own conscious force and not of something alien to Self, some power other than this Spirit. In these activities is expressed the conscious Will or Shakti of the Spirit moved to manifest its being in infinite ways, a Will or Power not ignorant but at one with its own self-knowledge and its knowledge of all that it is put out to express. And of this Power a secret spiritual will and soul-faith in us, the dominant hidden force of our nature, is the individual instrument, more nearly in communication with the Supreme, a surer guide and enlightener, could we once get at it and hold it, because profounder and more intimately near to the Identical and Absolute than the surface activities of our thought powers. To know that will in ourselves and in the universe and follow it to its divine finalities, whatever these may be, must surely be the highest way and truest culmination for knowledge as for works, for the seeker in life and for the seeker in Yoga.

The thought, since it is not the highest or strongest part of Nature, not even the sole or deepest index to Truth, ought not to follow its own exclusive satisfaction or take that for the sign of its attainment to the supreme Knowledge. It is here as the guide, up to a certain point, of the heart, the life and the other members but it cannot be a substitute for them; it has to see not only what is its own ultimate satisfaction but whether there is not an ultimate satisfaction intended also for these other members. An exclusive path of abstract thought would be justified, only if the object of the Supreme Will in the universe has been nothing more than a descent into the activity of the ignorance operated by the mind as blinding instrument and jailor through false idea and sensation and an ascent into the quiescence of knowledge equally operated by the mind through correct thought as enlightening instrument and saviour. But the chances are that there is an aim in the world less absurd and aimless, an impulse towards the Absolute less dry and abstract, a truth of the world more large and complex, a more richly infinite height of the Infinite. Certainly, an abstract logic must always arrive, as the old systems arrived, at an infinite empty Negation or an infinite equally vacant Affirmation; for, abstract it moves towards an absolute abstraction and these are the only two abstractions that are absolutely absolute. But a concrete ever deepening wisdom waiting on more and more riches of infinite experience and not the confident abstract logic of the narrow and incompetent human mind is likely to be the key to a divine suprahuman knowledge. The heart, the will, the life and even

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the body, no less than the thought, are forms of a divine Conscious-Being and indices of great significance. These too have powers by which the soul can return to its complete self-awareness or means by which it can enjoy it. The object of the Supreme Will may well be a culmination in which the whole being is intended to receive its divine satisfaction, the heights enlightening the depths, the material Inconscient revealed to itself as the Divine by the touch of the supreme Superconscience.

The traditional Way of Knowledge proceeds by elimination and rejects successively the body, the life, the senses, the heart, the very thought in order to merge into the quiescent Self or supreme Nihil or indefinite Absolute. The way of integral knowledge supposes that we are intended to arrive at an integral self-fulfilment and the only thing that is to be eliminated is our own unconsciousness, the Ignorance and the results of the Ignorance. Eliminate the falsity of the being which figures as the ego; then the true being can manifest in us. Eliminate the falsity of the life which figures as mere vital craving and the mechanical round of our corporeal existence; our true life in the power of the Godhead and the joy of the Infinite will appear. Eliminate the falsity of the senses with their subjection to material shows and to dual sensations; there is a greater sense in us that can open through these to the Divine in things and divinely reply to it. Eliminate the falsity of the heart with its turbid passions and desires and its dual emotions; a deeper heart in us can open with its divine love for all creatures and its infinite passion and yearning for the responses of the Infinite. Eliminate the falsity of the thought with its imperfect mental constructions, its arrogant assertions and denials, its limited and exclusive concentrations; a greater faculty of Knowledge is behind that can open to the true Truth of God and the soul and Nature and the universe. An integral self-fulfilment, —an absolute, a culmination for the experiences of the heart, for its instinct of love, joy, devotion and worship; an absolute, a culmination for the senses, for their pursuit of divine beauty and good and delight in the forms of things; an absolute, a culmination for the life, for its pursuit of works, of divine power, mastery and perfection; an absolute, a culmination beyond its own limits for the thought, for its hunger after truth and light and divine wisdom and knowledge. Not something quite other than themselves from which they are all cast away is the end of these things in our nature, but something supreme in which they at once transcend themselves and find their own absolutes and infinitudes, their harmonies beyond measure. Behind the traditional way of Knowledge, justifying its thought-process

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of elimination and withdrawal stands an overmastering spiritual experience. Deep, intense, convincing, common to all who have overstepped a certain limit of the active mind-belt into the horizonless inner space, this is the great experience of liberation, the consciousness of something within us that is behind and outside of the universe and all its forms, interests, aims, events and happenings, calm, untouched, unconcerned, illimitable, immobile, free, the uplook to something above us indescribable and unseizable into which by abolition of our personality we can enter, the presence of an omnipresent eternal witness Purusha, the sense of an Infinity or a Timelessness that looks down on us from an august negation of all our existence and is alone the one thing Real. This experience is the highest sublimation of spiritualised mind looking resolutely beyond its own existence. No one who has not passed through this liberation can be entirely free from the mind and its meshes, but one is not compelled to linger in this experience for ever. Great as it is, it is only the Mind's overwhelming experience of what is beyond itself and all it can conceive. It is a supreme negative experience, but beyond it is all the tremendous light of an infinite consciousness, an illimitable Knowledge, an affirmative absolute Presence.

The object of spiritual knowledge is the Supreme, the Divine, the Infinite, and Absolute. This Supreme has its relations to our individual being and its relations to the universe and it transcends both the soul and the universe. Neither the universe nor the individual are what they seem to be, for the report of them which our mind and our senses give us, is, so long as they are unenlightened by a faculty of higher supramental and suprasensuous knowledge, a false report, an imperfect construction, an attenuated and erroneous figure. And yet that which the universe and the individual seem to be is still a figure of what they really are, a figure that points beyond itself to the reality behind it. Truth proceeds by a correction of the values our mind and senses give us, and first by the action of a higher intelligence that enlightens and sets right as far as may be the conclusions of the ignorant sense-mind and limited physical intelligence; that is the method of all human knowledge and science. But beyond it there is a knowledge, a Truth-consciousness, that exceeds our intellect and brings us into the true light of which it is a refracted ray. There the abstract terms of pure reason and the constructions of the mind disappear or are converted into concrete soul-vision and the tremendous actuality of spiritual experience. This knowledge can turn away to the absolute Eternal and lose vision of the soul and the universe; but it can

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too see that existence from that Eternal. When that is done, we find that the ignorance of the mind and the senses and all the apparent futilities of human life were not an useless excursion of the conscious being, an otiose blunder. Here they were planned as a rough ground for the self-expression of the Soul that comes from the Infinite, a material foundation for its self-unfolding and self-possessing in the terms of the universe. It is true that in themselves they and all that is here have no significance, and to build separate significances for them is to live in an illusion, Maya; but they have a supreme significance in the Supreme, an absolute Power in the Absolute and it is that that assigns to them and refers to that Truth their present relative values. This is the all-uniting experience that is the foundation of the deepest integral and most intimate self-knowledge and world-knowledge.

In relation to the individual the Supreme is our own true and highest self, that which ultimately we are in our essence, that of which we are in our manifested nature. A spiritual knowledge, moved to arrive at the true Self in us, must reject, as the traditional way of knowledge rejects, all misleading appearances. It must discover that the body is not our self, our foundation of existence; it is a sensible form of the Infinite. The experience of Matter as the world's sole foundation and the physical brain and nerves and cells and molecules as the one truth of all things in us, the ponderous inadequate basis of materialism, is a delusion, a half-view taken for the whole, the dark bottom or shadow of things misconceived as the luminous substance, the effective figure of zero for the Integer. The materialist idea mistakes a creation for the creative Power, a means of expression for That which is expressed and expresses. Matter and our physical brain and nerves and body are the field and foundation for one action of a vital force that serves to connect the Self with the form of its works and maintains them by its direct dynamis. The material movements are an exterior notation by which the soul represents its perceptions of certain truths of the Infinite and makes them effective in the terms of Substance. These things are a language, a notation, a hieroglyphic, a system of symbols, not themselves the deepest truest sense of the things they intimate.

Neither is the Life our Self, the vitality, the energy which plays in the brain, nerves and body; it is a power and not the whole power of the Infinite. The experience of a life-force instrumentalising Matter as the foundation, source and true sum of all things, the vibrating unsteady basis of vitalism, is a delusion, a half-view taken for the whole, a tide on a near

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shore misconceived as all the ocean and its waters. The vitalist idea takes something powerful but outward for the essence. Life-force is the dynamisation of a consciousness which exceeds it. That consciousness is felt and acts but does not become valid to us in intelligence until we arrive at the higher term of Mind, our present summit. Mind is here apparently a creation of Life, but it is really the ulterior sense—not the ultimate—of Life itself and what is behind it and a more conscious formulation of its secret; Mind is an expression not of Life, but of that of which Life itself is a less luminous expression.

And yet Mind also, our mentality, our thinking, understanding part, is not our Self, is not That, not the end or the beginning; it is a half-light thrown from the Infinite. The experience of mind as the creator of forms and things and of these forms and things existing in the Mind only, the thin subtle basis of idealism, is also a delusion, a half-view taken for the whole, a pale refracted light idealised as the burning body of the sun and its splendour. This idealist vision also does not arrive at the essence of being, does not even touch it but only an inferior mode of Nature. Mind is the dubious outer penumbra of a conscious existence which is not limited by mentality but exceeds it. The method of the traditional way of knowledge, eliminating all these things arrives at the conception and realisation of a pure conscious existence, self-aware, self-blissful, unconditioned by mind and life and body, and to its ultimate positive experience that is Atman, the Self, the original and essential nature of our existence. Here at last there is something centrally true, but in its haste to arrive at it this knowledge assumes that there is nothing between the thinking mind and the Highest, *buddheḥ parāstasah*, and, shutting its eyes in samadhi, tries to rush through all that actually intervenes without even seeing these great and luminous kingdoms of the Spirit. Perhaps it arrives at its object, but only to fall asleep in the Infinite. Or, if it remains awake, it is in the highest experience of the Supreme into which the self-annulling Mind can enter but not in the supreme of the Supreme, Paratpara. The Mind can only be aware of the Self in a mentalised spiritual thinness, only of the mind-reflected Sachchidananda. The highest truth, the integral self-knowledge is not to be gained by this self-blinded leap into the Absolute but by a patient transit beyond the mind into the Truth-consciousness where the Infinite can be known, felt, seen, experienced in all the fullness of its unending riches. And there we discover this Self that we are to be not only a static tenuous vacant Atman, but a great dynamic Spirit individual, uni-

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versal and transcendent. That Self and Spirit cannot be expressed by the mind's abstract generalisations; all the inspired descriptions of the seers and mystics cannot exhaust its contents and its splendours.

In relation to the universe the Supreme is Brahman, the one Reality which is not only the spiritual, material and conscious substance of all the ideas and forces and forms of the universe, but their origin, support and possessor, the cosmic and supracosmic Spirit. All the last terms to which we can reduce the universe, Force and Matter, Name and Form, Purusha and Prakriti, are still not entirely that which the universe really is either in itself or its nature. As all that we are is the play and form, the mental, psychic, vital and physical expression of a supreme Self unconditioned by mind and life and body, the universe too is the play and form and cosmic soul-expression and nature-expression of a supreme existence which is unconditioned by force and matter, unconditioned by idea and name and form, unconditioned by the fundamental distinction of Purusha and Prakriti. Our supreme Self and the supreme Existence which has become the universe are one spirit, one self and one existence. The individual is in nature one expression of the universal Being, in spirit an emanation of the Transcendence. For if he finds his self, he finds too that his own true self is not this natural personality, this created individuality, but is an universal being in its relations with others and with Nature and in its upward term a portion or the living front of a supreme transcendental Spirit.

This supreme Existence is not conditioned by the individual or by the universe. A spiritual knowledge can therefore surpass or even eliminate these two powers of the Spirit and arrive at the conception of something utterly Transcendent, something that is unnameable and mentally unknowable, a sheer Absolute. The traditional way of knowledge eliminates individual and universe. The Absolute it seeks after is featureless, indefinable, relationless, not this, not that, *neti neti*. And yet we can say of it that it is One, that it is Infinite, that it is Ineffable Bliss, Consciousness, Existence. Although unknowable to the mind, yet through our individual being and through the names and forms of the universe we can approach the realisation of the supreme Self that is Brahman, and by the realisation of the Self we come to a certain realisation also of this utter Absolute of which our true Self is the essential form in our consciousness (*svarūpa*). These are the devices the human mind is compelled to use if it is to form to itself any conception at all of a transcendent and unconditioned Absolute. The system of negation is indispensable to it in order to get rid of its own definitions and limited experiences.

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it is obliged to escape through a vague Indefinite into the Infinite. For it lives in a closed prison of constructions and representations that are necessary for its action but are not the self-existent truth either of Matter or Life or Mind or Spirit. But if we can once cross beyond the Mind's frontier twilight into the vast plane of supramental Knowledge, these devices cease to be indispensable. Supermind has quite another, a positive and direct and living experience of the supreme Infinite. The Absolute is beyond personality and beyond impersonality, and yet it is both the Impersonal and the supreme Person and all persons. The Absolute is beyond the distinction of unity and multiplicity, and yet it is the One and the innumerable Many in all the universes. It is beyond all limitation by quality and yet it is not limited by a qualityless void but is too all infinite qualities. It is the individual soul and all souls and more of them; it is the formless Brahman and the universe. It is the cosmic and the supracosmic spirit, the supreme Lord, the supreme Self, the supreme Purusha and supreme Shakti, the Ever Unborn who is endlessly born, the Infinite who is innumerable finite, the multitudinous One, the complex Simple, the many-sided Single, the Word of the Silence Ineffable, the impersonal omnipresent Person, the Mystery, translucent in highest consciousness to its own spirit, but to a lesser consciousness veiled in its own exceeding light and impenetrable for ever. These things are to the dimensional mind irreconcilable opposites, but to the constant vision and experience of the supramental Truth-consciousness they are so simply and inevitably the intrinsic nature of each other that even to think of them as contraries is an unimaginable violence. The walls constructed by the measuring and separating Intellect have disappeared and the Truth in its simplicity and beauty appears and reduces all to terms of its harmony and unity and light. Dimensions and distinctions remain but as figures for use, not a separative prison for the self-forgetting Spirit.

The consciousness of the transcendent Absolute with its consequence in individual and universal is the last, the eternal knowledge. Our minds may deal with it on various lines, may build upon it conflicting philosophies, may limit, modify, overstress, understress sides of the knowledge, deduce from it truth or error; but our intellectual variations and imperfect statements make no difference to the ultimate fact that if we push thought and experience to their end, this is the knowledge in which they terminate. The object of a Yoga of spiritual knowledge can be nothing else than this eternal Reality, this Self, this Brahman, this Transcendent that dwells over all

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and in all and is manifest yet concealed in the individual, manifest yet disguised in the universe.

The culmination of the path of knowledge need not necessarily entail extinction of our world-existence. For the Supreme to whom we assimilate ourselves, the Absolute and Transcendent into whom we enter has always the complete and ultimate consciousness for which we are seeking and yet he supports by it his play in the world. Neither are we compelled to believe that our world-existence ends because by attaining to knowledge its object or consummation is fulfilled and therefore there is nothing more for us here afterwards. For what we gain at first, with its release and immeasurable silence and quietude is only the eternal self-realisation by the individual in the essence of his conscious being; there will still remain on that foundation, unannulled by the silence, one with the release and freedom, the infinitely proceeding self-fulfilment of Brahman, its dynamic divine manifestation in the individual and by his presence, example and action in others and in the universe at large,—the work which the Great Ones remain to do. Our dynamic self-fulfilment cannot be worked out so long as we remain in the egoistic consciousness, in the mind's candle-lit darkness, in the bondage. Our present limited consciousness can only be a field of preparation, it can consummate nothing; for all that it manifests is marred through and through by an ego-ridden ignorance and error. The true and divine self-fulfilment of Brahman in the manifestation is only possible on the foundation of the Brahman-consciousness and therefore through the acceptance of life by the liberated soul, the Jivanmukta.

This is the integral knowledge for we know that everywhere and in all conditions all to the eye that sees is One, to a divine experience all is one block of the Divine. It is only the mind which for the temporary convenience of its own thought and aspiration seeks to cut an artificial line of rigid division, a fiction of perpetual incompatibility between one aspect and another of the eternal oneness. The liberated knower lives and acts in the world not less than the bound soul and ignorant mind but more, doing all actions, *sarvakṛt*, only with a true knowledge and a greater conscient power. And by so doing he does not forfeit the supreme unity nor falls from the supreme consciousness and highest knowledge. For the Supreme, however hidden now to us, is here in the world no less than he could be in the most utter and ineffable self-extinction, the most intolerant Nirvana.

SRI AUROBINDO

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THE whole world is built upon the principle of freedom, but a leaden subjection is its apparent fact. As the essential delight of existence of which the Upanishads speak has turned here into undelight, pain and suffering; as the essential harmony has turned into disharmony and discord; as the essential light of knowledge has turned into the darkness or obscurity of ignorance; so freedom has turned into subjection and slavery. Each living unit, each conscious being in the world has the inherent freedom to follow its own course; is, indeed, meant to do so in perfect accord with others; but in reality each is in bondage to some iron law of Nature, or some Chance or Necessity. To the eye of knowledge all beings and creatures appear to be mounted on the wheels of Maya and whirled along by the tangled force of the three gunas or the qualitative modes of Nature. It is true that in man there is a sense of freedom—freedom of choice and action; but if he probes deeper within himself, he will discover that his choice and his decision spring from a shifting combination of his psychological elements and the general unstable background of his natural temperament; and his action follows instincts and impulses which often seem to elude his mental control and can only half express and half obscure his will and decision. He will also discover that what he regards as his free-will is but a tool or device of Nature designed to serve a double end: first, to give him a false, a delusive sense of freedom, so that he can complacently continue in her subjection; and, second, to give him a semblance, perhaps even a tantalising glimpse of the real freedom which will one day be his when he transcends his ego and realises his soul. Nature works through many an enigma and paradox. She is at once the binder of souls and their deliverer. She starts by binding and ends by delivering. But so long as the consciousness of man has not widened beyond the triple formula of the lower Nature, *aparā prakriti*, he cannot be really free. He can be free only when he stands superior to all compulsion, inner and outer; which amounts to a superiority to that very existence of which desire is the fulcrum and the ego the self-appointed leader.

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But why this bondage and subjection, one may ask in amazement, if freedom is the essential principle of existence? Sri Aurobindo would reply that division is the root of this subjection, the phenomenal fact of division in the indivisible unity of universal existence. But why and how did this division start? It started, because the One willed to be many, *sa aichchata ekoham vahasjam*. Delimitation, differentiation, diversification culminated in complete division and separation. Evolution, starting from Matter, proceeded on the principle of infinite divisibility of substance, and each atom that flitted apart from others was, as it were, a dumb representative, an unconscious symbol of an evolving conscious individuality. In man the individuality became definite, distinct, specific; the sense of separation was clinched. This division, this sense of separation is the chief cause of bondage and subjection. For, if it is the universal Nature that has formed and developed this surface individuality, then she is undoubtedly its leader and guide; and to think of a separate individual free-will is but to betray one's ignorance of the mechanism of one's nature. Not that a rigid determinism is the ultimate truth of existence—there is always a flux, a precarious balancing of elements and energies, an uncertain wrestle of forces which leave ample scope for individual choice and initiative; but the choice and initiative come from Nature and not from any separate "I" drunk with the false sense of its own independence.

Still, there is somewhere in us, deep down in our being, an entity that is a real individual; not created by the lower nature of the three gunas, but immortal and free. It has in it the potentiality of being universal and transcendent, and embracing the whole world in its illimitable consciousness. Not identified with any formation of Nature, it is free from all compulsion and free to realise its will in the world of forms. It is the soul or psychic being in us. If we unite with it, we are cured of all sense of separation and recover the oneness of existence in which there is no subjection, because there is no division. The will that flashes out from the soul is not the will of the Nature of the three gunas, but the will of the self-nature of the soul, its pure spiritual nature, which is attuned to or rather a spark of the will of the Divine. To realise and live in the soul is to live in perfect freedom. It is to realise the central autonomy of our being.

Those whose spiritual aim is to liberate the soul from the yoke of Nature and live in its inalienable freedom, will be satisfied with this central autonomy of their being, and seek for no other achievement in life. There are, indeed, many who do not even believe in the possibility of any other achieve-

ment. A certain purity and transparency in the nature, permitting of a clear reflection of the free soul, is regarded by them as the highest attainment. They do not seem to conceive of any radical transformation and liberation of Nature. The utmost that they expect is an intense purification of it, resulting in a great increase and predominance of the quality of sattwa, the quality of limpid understanding and happiness and harmony. But whatever the predominance and perfection of sattwa, the harmony established by it in the nature is an imperfect and insecure harmony; for, the other two gunas, rajas and tamas, never cease from contending for mastery and clouding the sattwic light. These spiritual seekers leave Nature more and less to herself, bound to her own limited modes and qualities and subject to gross or subtle obscurations. They are content only with the autonomy of the soul.

Sri Aurobindo envisages an integral autonomy in the human being. Not only the soul of man, but his mind, heart, life, and even his body can be made free and autonomous. The principle behind this postulate is as old as the Veda and the Upanishads. We know that there is an Annamaya Purusha in us who can be called the physical being in the body, possessing greater potentialities and commanding higher powers than the material sheath it occupies. By a perfect development of the consciousness and force of this Annamaya Purusha, one can build up a stable autonomy in one's physical personality. Similarly, we have a Pranamaya Purusha who can be made to awake to his divine possibilities and establish an autonomous kingdom in the prana or the vital, full of the tranquil delight of desireless enjoyment. The Manomaya Purusha can likewise exercise his mastery over the vagrant thoughts and fancies of the mind and establish a harmony and autonomy in it. Each part of our composite being is indispensable to the fullness of the whole and has to be given the utmost scope and facilities for developing itself in a happy and healthy freedom.

The autonomy of the physical being will mean its freedom from the tyranny of the lower vital and the pontifical interference of the mind. A limpid intuition will play in it, developing strength and suppleness and a conscious receptivity to the higher spiritual forces. It will seek and cherish Light with the same tenacity with which it clings now to its habitual inertia and obscurity. The autonomy of the prana or the vital will mean a release from all duress and dictation of the mind, on the one hand, and the incapacitating inertia and conservatism of the body, on the other. The prana will grow in force and flexibility and harmony and amplitude. It will revel

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in all high explorations and adventures, unhampered by the yoke of the body and the cautious timidity of the mind. The autonomy of the mind will be an ordered play of intuition in thought and reason and judgement, and a settled polarity to the light of Truth undeflected by the desires and passions of the prana or the dull drag of the body. And this integral autonomy, built and organised round the Divine in our psychic essence, can alone make us free from all bondage to the modes of Nature. The Will of the omnipresent One is the only free Will in the world, and it is our union with the Divine and His Will that alone can make us really free.

This vision of an integral autonomy of the human being opens up vast horizons in spiritual culture. The ideal of the salvation of the individual soul or the Chaitya Purusha ceases to have an exclusive appeal; it seems to be imperfect and incomplete. A more comprehensive ideal of the integral liberation of the being—liberation of the Annamaya, Pranamaya and Manomaya Purushas along with or in the wake of that of the Chaitya Purusha commands our devotion and presses forward towards self-realisation. No longer can we afford to leave out the Annamaya, Pranamaya and Manomaya Purushas in the cold shade of neglect and concentrate exclusively on the development and freedom of the soul or the Chaitya Purusha. What has been attained up to now in the field of spiritual realisation appears rather poor and insufficient by the side of this embracing ideal of the integral freedom and autonomy of the whole being of man. If the Annamaya, Pranamaya and Manomaya Purushas are the projections of our central being, the Self, then it stands to reason that there is a teleological purpose in their existence in us, and a full and perfect development of all their potentialities must be included in any wide scheme of synthetic spiritual culture. It would be irrational, if not positively disastrous to the harmonious fulfilment of our spiritual destiny, to relegate these Purushas to the limbo of Avidya in our impatient, vertiginous drive towards the soul or the Spirit. They have been called Brahman in the Upanishads—*Annam Brahmeti vyajanat*, he (Bhrigu, son of Varuna) knew Matter as Brahman; *prano Brahmeti vyajanat*, he knew Life as Brahman; *mano Brahmeti vyajanat*, he knew Mind as Brahman.¹ Ancient knowledge saw man as an evolving organism with correlated components grouped round the soul, which is the secret abode of the Divine. Each component part has its own soul, as it were, a delegated image of the central being, presiding over the growth

¹ Taittiriya Upanishad.

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and perfection of its own realm. Each has its own innate truth and law of spontaneous outflowing. Therefore, when each part of man develops according to its own law and rhythm without any let or hindrance from others, and yet maintains a relation of mutual interchange and harmonious co-operation, we have an integral autonomy in the whole being.

The truth of this federal autonomy of our composite being has an important bearing upon the theory and practice of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The Integral Yoga starts with a simultaneous movement of surrender to the Divine Mother and an awakening of the soul or the psychic being. The more the psychic being awakes, the more it infuses itself into the parts of our nature and awakes in each of them the dormant Purusha. The evolution of the consciousness and will of these Purushas makes the aspiration integral and dynamically fruitful. Coercion or suppression has no place in the action of the Integral Yoga. Each part of our nature must seek the Light and willingly lend itself to a radical transformation by it. Each part must of itself open to the Mother's redeeming Force, and cannot be compelled by others with impunity. The influence of the psychic being can do much to purify and enlighten the parts and remove the impediments to their efflorescence; but for any direct intervention of the higher Light or Force, it is essential that the parts themselves should seek and aspire for it and gladly submit to its work of transfiguration. What is usually done in the traditional yogas is that a sort of purification is imposed upon the parts of the nature by the sattwic mind under the direct or indirect pressure of the soul. In the Integral Yoga something of this method can be followed in the beginning, but for the final stages of purification, and particularly of transformation, it has to be replaced by the direct aspiration and opening of the parts themselves under the inspiration and guidance of the presiding Purusha in each of them. "Each part has to be kept clear from the other and do its own work and each has to get the Truth in it from the psychic and above. The truth descending from above will more and more harmonise their action, though the perfect harmony can come only when there is the supramental fulfilment." (Letters of Sri Aurobindo—vol. IV) The assent of each part of the being is indispensable in the sadhana of the Integral Yoga, for conversion and transformation cannot be imposed upon any unwilling or recalcitrant part. If any part refuses to turn to the Light or admit it into itself when it comes, the only effective way to deal with it is to put it more and more in touch with the soul, to infect it with the psychic aspiration and devotion, and convince it by the

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knowledge of the enlightened intelligence of the error of its refusal and the absolute certainty of its highest fulfilment in the Divine Life. No grim-eyed repression can ever avail in the long run—the outraged part is sure to revolt and avenge itself by explosive outbursts. The Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya Purushas have each to be awakened, fostered in their growth, stimulated in their high aspiration and linked with the Chaitya Purusha, so that an integrated human personality may emerge from the welter of our nature's normal anarchy. In an integral spiritual culture, it is not enough to make the mind fully conscious and luminous with knowledge; the consciousness of the prana and even of the body have to be developed to such an extent as to effect their complete release from the subconsciousness or inconscience in which much of them is at present engulfed.

It may sound paradoxical to speak of making the body and the prana conscious, but once we admit the Upanishadic truth that there is a Purusha in the body, a Purusha, a projection of our Self, in the vital, evolving with the evolution of our material and vital parts, the awakening of consciousness in what seems unconscious becomes an inevitable eventuality.¹ In fact, evolution is nothing but a progressive emergence of consciousness from the dense inconscience of Matter. Whatever may have been the aim and endeavour of the ascetic yogas, which sought their fulfilment elsewhere than on this earth, one of the most important parts of the working of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is to awaken and develop the physical, the vital and the mental being of man and lead them, first under the influence of the psychic (the soul) and then by the unveiled power of the Supermind or the Vijnana, towards a divine fulfilment of their destiny; for, their destiny is not dissolution or extinction, but the manifestation of the Light and Power and Love and Bliss and Beauty of God on earth. The transformation of man's nature presupposes an evolution of consciousness in every part of the being; at least, it can go on with an unfaltering steadiness only if the consciousness has already awakened. "If you desire this transformation," says Sri Aurobindo in the "Mother", "put yourself in the hands of the Mother and her Powers without cavil or resistance and let her do unhindered her work within you. Three things you must have, consciousness, plasticity and unreserved surrender. For you must be conscious in your mind and soul and heart and life and *the very cells of the body*, aware of the Mother

¹ Cf. "The physical consciousness has to become balanced, filled with the light and force from above, made conscious and receptive"—Letters of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. IV

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and her Powers and their working; for although she can and does work in you even in your obscurity and your unconscious parts and moments, it is not the same thing as when you are in an awakened and living communion with her...consciousness will awake everywhere in you by constant openness to the Wisdom and Light, the Force, the Harmony and Beauty, the Perfection that come flowing down from above. Even the body will awake and unite at last its consciousness subliminal no longer to the supramental superconscious Force, feel all her powers permeating from above and below and around it and thrill to a supreme Love and Ananda."

Let us illustrate by an example what we mean by the conscious aspiration and opening of the body. If there is some illness in my body, my mental prayer to the Divine Mother to heal it will certainly bear fruit, but the fruit may take more or less time in coming; but, if my body is perverse or inert and closed to any higher influence, it may take very long or may not come at all. In any case, even if the result comes, it may not be the same as if the body consciousness itself had prayed and opened to the Mother's Force and received it when it came. In the latter case the result would have been miraculously rapid, even instantaneous, and powerfully, because directly, effective. The body can be made fully conscious with a consciousness all its own. It can pray and aspire and profit by the Grace that comes down in response to its call. Similarly the prana or the vital can be made fully conscious and autonomous. We find most illuminating examples of the conscious will and action of the body and the vital in the Prayers and Meditations of the Mother. In her Prayer of the 3rd November, 1912, the Mother speaks of the will of her body "to become Thy (the Divine's) docile instrument and Thy faithful servant". In her Prayer of the 19th November, 1912, she says in regard to her body, "...this substance which, being Thyself, desires to be Thy willing servant." Again in her Prayer of July 11, 1914, she says, "The whole physical being would wish to be dissolved and reconstituted in an adoration without limit, O Lord." In her Prayer of December 8, 1916, we get a very interesting description of the separate conscious movements of her mind and vital: "Suddenly awakened, the vital being rose, stretched itself and shook off the dust of its long torpor; it perceived from the elasticity of its members that it was still vigorous and fit to act. And it was with an ardent faith that it replied to the sovereign call: 'Here am I, what demandest Thou of me, O Lord?' But before another word could be uttered, the mind intervened in its turn, and, after bowing

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down before the Master in token of obedience, thus spoke to Him, 'Thou knowest, O Lord, that I am surrendered to Thee, and that I try my best to be a faithful and pure intermediary of Thy supreme Will'."

If a constant, conscious, dynamic and integral union with the Divine is aimed at as the supreme consummation of spiritual culture, then no part of the human being can be left submerged in inconscience, or subconsciousness, but all have to be made conscious and autonomous. An unconscious, subconscious or enslaved part cannot certainly unite with the Superconscious Divine. And if a single part is left out of the union, the union remains partial and imperfect, and therefore, to that extent, impeding and unproductive in life.

The above consideration entitles us to the conclusion that the highest perfection of man on earth is an integral autonomy of his being in which all the members, liberated and fully developed, unite, with the soul as their centre, to manifest the Divine in terms of the material life. It is only in this way, by the spiritual union of the autonomous parts of our being, that the integration of the human personality, fumbled after by the empirical psychology of our times, can be effected, and in no other. The secret of autonomy and integration lies in the indwelling Purushas and not in the superficial mechanism of Nature as we mentally perceive it.

RISHABHCHAND

CONSCIOUSNESS AND REALITY.*

I

Unless we see that a Consciousness exists within and behind all things, as well as the energising Force which is now believed to be the underlying factor relating all phenomena, it is impossible for us to realise how all this profuse variation and diversity of movements which make up the Cosmos are indeed a harmony possessing their own purposive rhythm. The sameness to which all things ultimately reduce themselves—whether we call it an Æther, or an Energy, or a luminous Oneness—is in fact nothing else but that supreme Consciousness, the transcendent Origin of all entities, acting as a Power, a sustaining, creative, guiding Force. This is even as the ancient Indian sages had discerned the dynamic Supernature to be, a divine creative Power whose essential Nature and expression is a Consciousness-Force. But the ancients had not yet been able to relate this profound Truth with an immediate knowledge of the earth-life, that which (including man himself) has grown and developed through an evolutionary progression. This latter knowledge had to come only centuries later, after man had begun to grapple with the problem of the materiality of his existence. By this time, however, the gap between the ancient revelations and man's growth in worldly knowledge had developed into an almost unbridgeable fissure. Yet we have to see that the ancients had overleaped the truth of earth precisely in order to seize in its pristine purity that ultimate Truth beyond.

This sudden and seemingly miraculous heightening in man's awareness is indeed characteristic of the beginnings of each new phase or cycle in human progress, (as though man at each stage has been given something new, which henceforth he has to bring down to the level of his ordinary life in order to uplift it.) In the whole recorded history of man's cultural growth,—as far as we know from the palæolithic cave drawings, and the various ancient

* "The Life Divine" Volume II, Chapter I (pp. 10-21) 2nd. Edn.

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monolithic sculpture works whose origin is otherwise a mystery—we discern this cyclic movement as the underlying pattern of progress. First a luminous revelation or vision appeared which indicated man's awakening to an unseized truth, which seemed occult and symbolical at first, until the reality behind the symbol would be realised. This original vision or revelation became a nucleus around which a new culture or faith could grow. Thus this sudden enlightenment would be inevitably followed by a slower and more laborious process, in which the widespread penetration of the revealed truth would eventually be obscured in the most material level of man's life. We have to see here the meeting of the two cosmic streams, the descent of something from above the evolution, and joining and mingling with it the evolutionary ascent growing upwards, where the higher has apparently become obscured in the lower. We have then the familiar picture of the disintegration and final obliteration of cultures, (though their inner essence lives on to enrich at critical periods the newly rising ones). The stage is then set for a new revelation to come and usher in a new phase, a new direction for man's efforts. We see this more particularly in the present age, which has witnessed the gradual widespread degeneration and sweeping away of all age-long human values. The spread of materialism, nihilism and unbelief has all helped to submerge the ancient universal truths and spiritual riches of the past. It is at this denuded stage that man has become increasingly aware of the gap between the original revelations that erstwhile sustained the race, and his present indecisive knowledge which is consequently so uncertain since it lacks the necessary stable foundation. Hence in order to bridge his present efforts with the past, man has to go back to the very beginnings of the present era of knowledge, that is, to the revelations of the ancient Aryan Seers, which Sri Aurobindo has clearly demonstrated to be the widest basis for this present age of man's higher ascent in knowledge.

From our present standpoint of knowledge, we find three divergent conclusions which man has reached in his attempt to discover what is behind all this cosmic movement. In the first place he has established the fact that a persistence exists at the heart of things—a mechanical determinism which is in reality the basic character of the material nature itself. Secondly he has realised that all is change, that nothing persists and that earth and life are merely the result of chance or random occurrences. This has led him to conclude that all phenomena ultimately resolve themselves into probabilities, and that even our life is the result of a chance

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accident. Thirdly he has to some extent, attempted to reconcile these two opposing trends, of Necessity and Chance, by bringing in the principle of eternal recurrence, where persistence as recurrence, is the fundamental pattern of the whole, while change is represented by the movement of a limited vision within that circular orbit. Yet although this cyclic movement introduces a wider law of harmony, it can ultimately only resolve the conflict in the world nature by regarding the latter as an illusion, from which one must completely break away. Fixed to this recurrent circle, one is continually brought back to the point from which one started and therefore the logical aim would then be to overleap this fixity and reach the permanent reality that underlies all change. But we now realise that this pattern of eternal recurrence is but the picture of our own mental being, tied to a fixed point—the ego-centre—around which it is obliged to revolve endlessly. While this seems the pattern of our earthly life, is only so while ever it is dominated and centralised by mind. But if, as a higher vision has revealed to us, we accept a greater entity beyond mind, which is also present in the earth nature (though obscured and embryonic), we have to adjust our views and grasp the true reconciling and all-embracing harmony beyond these three terms of our material, vital and mental existence. From the standpoint of this higher harmonising vision, we are led to realise that persistence, necessity, and mechanical rigidity only appear to be the rule when we observe only the materiality of things. Similarly Chance is the supreme law when we only see the random and indeterminate movements of Life as an all-pervading Force that enters into and instigates all activities. Likewise eternal recurrence is the natural consequence when we regard mind alone as the pre-eminent or ultimate principle, both of the world and our own existence. Clearly we have to take into account that higher overarching Principle, which Sri Aurobindo has shown to exist beyond the highest periphery of mind. This is the Principle of Supermind, which is in fact the divine creative Power that stands above the mental life, and in whose sustaining embrace all the cross-currents of our worldly life have their origin. It is this divine Power that has now to be brought into our life and activity,—or at least the way prepared for its entry therein—if we are to transform our own consciousness and the existence of the world into the very stuff of the divine Reality.

Our consideration of the Supernature compels us to return to the fundamental concept of the Vedantic Seers that a concealed Consciousness dwells within as well as behind all things. We can thus see more logically how

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man, a self-conscious being, has been able to emerge out of the inert and apparently inconscient stuff of earth, and how the universe is a harmonious interconnected system, and not a chance formation or a splitting off of worlds. Otherwise we are obliged to oscillate, as we have already seen, between a blind Chance and an inescapable Necessity as the explanation of the universe. But when we speak of Consciousness as the creator and sustainer of the worlds, we cannot mean a Mind even of universal dimensions, (although it is difficult to conceive or speak in mental terms of Something beyond mind). Neither can we mean an extra-cosmic Being with an omniscient Mind and omnipotent Will, (which is but an image projected and magnified of man's ego). These concepts have indeed served their purpose, particularly in moulding man's past religious and philosophic thought and beliefs, but we now see them as a limited framework. They have served their purpose at one stage of man's progressive development, but are not wide enough to form the basis of our present expanding view of the Cosmos, such as modern science has opened up. For we are now realising that it is only man's magnified ego that has rigidly interposed the principle of mind, of which man's own world is composed, as the ultimate reality and origin. When we speak of Consciousness, therefore, we must mean Something beyond mind, of which mind itself is a derivative as well as a proper instrument of it. On this hypothesis we can more readily see that the divine Consciousness is not only the formative Creator, but above all that it has entered and even obscured itself in the very substance of the created world. All is created out of Consciousness, all is upheld and sustained by that, and furthermore the seeds of Consciousness itself form the nuclear core of all substance, and hence it is the guiding principle of the individual growths—whether these be the atoms of matter or the soul-being of man. Behind the action of the material Energy there is a secret involved Consciousness, cosmic and infinite, which builds up through that surface-acting Energy the means of its evolutionary manifestation in a world of obscured Consciousness, the Inconscience, as it is better termed.

It is thus easier to comprehend that this inertness, this utter inconscience of matter we see in the world, had to be the necessary basis and starting-point, if an evolution of Consciousness out of its compressed and widely scattered seeds was (and is) to take place. Only by Consciousness thus submerging itself in the antithesis of its original condition could the re-emergence take place in a new form, embodied in material substance and imbued with life and mind. But as yet man possesses but the partially

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emerged Consciousness which is struggling towards the complete consummate conscious Being. What we see at first in the mineral world is a Consciousness that is completely involved in a static inert fixity, a Force that has become highly compressed and immobilised or restricted to an infinitesimal orbit. Only as the evolution progresses do we become aware of Consciousness emerging stage by stage. At first in the small beginnings of life we see the principle of free variation, and the possibilities natural to an infinite creative Consciousness, slowly and gradually attaining a wider freedom. But this freedom, it seems to us, only expresses itself through a blind, circuitous and wasteful process, which really represents, on a time-scale incomprehensible to man, the vast laboratory of Nature's creative progression. It is in fact the expression of an innate unbounded freedom, made possible only by the entry of the original divine Consciousness as the instigating Dynamism of the whole movement. Only when we realise that the underlying Energy, of which all things are seen to be an expression, is indeed a manifestation of the original Consciousness-Force, the guiding and harmonising Power, do we find a logical answer and a harmonious resolution of all the contraries that present themselves to us, whether interpreted as a mechanical Necessity or merely a blind Chance.

It is to be seen, moreover, that our own individual form of consciousness is wholly conditioned by the underlying nature of the world as it is at present. Thus we are not normally aware of the original spiritual substance of things, because cosmic mind has given a seizable form to substance, which the individual can hence utilise. Even the structure of pure matter, whether seen as particles of atoms or as globes of the heavenly bodies, is determined by the overarching dominance of Mind over this lower cosmic Nature. This is seen clearly when our consciousness is raised to the highest periphery of mind—the Overmind—where the clear distinction between the higher and the lower Nature becomes apparent. It is by the light of this higher or divine Nature that we discern the path towards which the cosmic evolution is being directed, and the role of man—the mental being—therein, and particularly of his embryonic soul which is the undying flame of the divine Nature in man. We become aware of this presence more directly when we plunge inwards to the very core of our being and identify ourselves with that inner light. This inner plunge in fact gives us the direct contact with the Divine Reality beyond the phenomenal existence, while the higher ascent along the steps of mind assures us of the untold possibilities in the transformation of man and the earth life, to be attained ultimately by

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those very steps. Thus involved in the evolutionary Nature the seed of the Divine Nature struggles to emerge into material form; while above there is the higher Power of the Divine Nature, which is itself pressing down to enter into the terrestrial formation. The transformation of the living substance and individual mind into enlightened channels, can only come through this growing relation of the emerging soul with the divine creative Consciousness. In this relation the higher sphere of mind must necessarily become the intermediary instrument between the embryonic soul enmeshed in the Ignorance of the world, and the supreme Power of the divine Knowledge and Consciousness beyond. By man's increasing surrender and self-opening to this higher Power the individual mentality can become the faithful and light-infused instrument for the activation of soul-power in the world, and thus prepare the ground for the advent of the divine Light to enter and elevate this lower terrestrial Nature.

II

It is clear that because the evolutionary progression is graded from matter to life, from life to mind, and from mind to the spiritual Principle as yet beyond, so man's approach to knowledge must take into account this graded ascent and see clearly the diverse, as well as the particular, laws pertaining to these interacting constituents. Thus an interpretation of Existence wholly from the material standpoint does not, as man is now finding, give any complete solution; neither can Life itself give any decisive guidance, since the life-movement here in the world is as yet blind to its own working and destiny. Although, from the standpoint of mind, there seems at first the hope and possibility that a wider mental knowledge will reach the Truth, yet sooner or later we arrive at the stage when we realise more acutely that mind is not the be-all and end-all of existence, that mind itself is or has to become the instrument of a higher Consciousness. For just as mind has moulded the lower forms of energy—matter and life—into its own modes and forms in the world, so the divine Consciousness entering the evolution will refashion the energies of mind, as well as of life and matter, to express more perfectly the divine Nature and Being. Hence man's surrender to the higher divine Power, the omniscient Knower who is subtly and intimately connected with his being, is the essential condition.

It is when we begin to silence the mind—that is, the superficial movements agitated by life, desire and the egoistic impulse—that we see the

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deeper truths of our own nature emerge. For standing back from these superficial movements we can observe the whole working of mind and life in us. We enter then into the silence and detachment of our inner mental being—that which the ancient Indian philosophers called the silent Purusha. But we should discover further that this inner silent witness can also become active as the seeker of the highest truths, and eventually as the regulator and harmoniser of our life, reflecting more and more the higher Knowledge which this inner mind reveals to us. This is our true mental being, the wide universal and plastic instrument which has to displace the narrow superficial centre that persists in falsely identifying itself as the real perceiving Person. But we must note also that the universalised mental being in us is not the whole truth of our personality, though the establishment of its wideness in us is a primary basis for our growing beyond the ego life. The wider mental consciousness, in fact, represents our opening to the higher truths which belong to the spiritual Principle above mind. To reach these truths we have to extend our awareness to the topmost reaches of mind, and see there the wholeness and totality of things in their correct perspective. This global seeing will only become increasingly operative in us as man makes firmer contact with those higher reaches of mind, eventually establishing in humanity itself the Mind of Light, as Sri Aurobindo terms this definitive stage when man can make the Overmind zone manifest in the world.

By raising our awareness to that wideness and clarity of seeing we begin to discern the secret rhythm and purpose of the world and of our own existence. Above the cross-currents and confusion of our present worldly life, we realise that the origin of both the individual and cosmos lie in the transcendent Reality, whose essence is contained at the core of all things; and above all we begin to realise the significance of the true creative Power of the divine Light, which stands above the overarching cap of Overmind. But even having reached this elevating revelation we have to come back to the fact that our real work lies in the world, for it is here in the ignorance and unknowing of the world's blind struggle, that the light of Truth has to be brought. It is not for us, therefore, to lose ourselves in this higher or even highest realisation. What the Overmind plane shows us is the full extent of the Ignorance—that is, the condition of the lower creation struggling upwards towards the purity and perfection of the divine Truth. It does not possess, however, the redeeming power to bring this Truth into a working relation within our earthly life. This belongs to the divine creative

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Power, for whose work in a world overcast by mind, the Overmind is its subtle and light-bearing instrument. It is therefore this creative Power of the Divine, or more precisely Supermind, that has to become the ruling Force in the world, not merely as the Consciousness-Force acting from behind the veil, but as the manifest Reality in the earth life. And for this accomplishment Overmind acts as the frontier zone, both guarding the Ignorance and giving access to the divine Reality yet to come. But first, and foremost, owing to the insufficiency of Mind itself (even to Overmind), it is necessary that the light of the soul or psychic being that is latent and embryonic in man, should emerge as an active principle in the evolution. Without this decisive development mind's opening cannot bring down the higher truths beyond as a permanent Reality in the earth nature.

Let us therefore re-state the two parts of our endeavour; on the one hand the clarifying and opening of mind to the higher truths, and on the other the bringing into action of the soul's perception and direct contact with the Divine. For the former achievement our study of Sri Aurobindo's revelations in "The Life Divine" forms the widest and completest basis. But it is the soul's direct contact with the Divine and a bringing of its light increasingly into our daily activity that is the essential condition. And reciprocally the soul grows through the mind's increasing contact with the divine Light, which is brought closer to us through our seizing these revelations of "The Life Divine".

The incapacity of mind is most clearly experienced when we try to conceive the reality of the Absolute. When we call the Absolute an Indeterminable we fail to realise that this negative concept merely represents our inability to conceive the Wholeness of it. First we have to see that the Absolute is capable of its own infinite self-determination. By gradually broadening our standpoint of perception we are eventually able to identify ourselves with the Highest,—the Divine Reality itself. And by centering our vision on that divine Origin which is the true Absolute harbouring the supramental Truth-consciousness, we perceive the occult way of breaking through the Ignorance in which mind is enmeshed. That which was seen by the ancient Seers as a Light, a Truth, a Power beyond this nether world of Unknowing is now revealed more clearly and precisely by Sri Aurobindo to be the pure divine creative Power, whose descent alone can liberate the world from its state of darkness and division. Overmind is its paramount instrument in this creative process, being directly attached to its higher Source, as well as intimately connected with the evolving worlds of mind,

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life and matter which are growing upwards out of a sunken consciousness. The role of Overmind, we might say, is that of Lord of this lower hemisphere; and its action is centred on a fundamental duality which is the basis of all this division and fragmentation of the world. Supermind, on the other hand, is the divine Power, and is the Lord of all Cosmos—both of the lower and the higher hemispheres. It holds in the Oneness of its all-encompassing embrace both the Perfection of the Divine Nature, and the Ignorance and Division of the lower evolving Nature. If therefore we seek a heaven compounded of the divine Purity and Perfection itself, not as a sanctuary of escape beyond cosmic action but as the integral possession of the world, then it can only be by the descent of Supermind into the earth nature that our ultimate aspiration and the highest aim of our endeavour can be fulfilled. For mind, as we have realised, is not the end-product of our earthly evolution. There is a higher goal to which the religions of all times have pointed,—but it is only through the true Divine guidance that we are able to see the way of its coming into the world.

The secret of this divine transformation lies essentially in our own preparation for the divine Descent, and this means more particularly for man the proper cultivation of mind into a purified, calm, discriminative and light-responsive instrument. This cultivation not only reveals the goal more clearly, but little by little removes obstructions and interferences that inevitably arise through the obscured working of mind, wholly immersed as it is in the blind flux of the upward-struggling Nature. It is by this constant integral process that we become more and more detached from the ego's grasp, which is indeed the central core of resistance in man against the emergence of soul in the evolution, and the advent of the Divine Power in the world.

N. PEARSON

SOCIAL TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS

TENSIONS and conflicts between racial and national societies or sub-groups within them are at the last instance, undoubtedly, always due to psychological reasons i.e. motivations and attitudes, conscious or unconscious, of certain kinds, even though the professed difficulties are almost always affirmed and believed to be objective. Even when economic exploitation, the too evident inequality between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', is affirmed as the reason of conflict between capital and labour, the real reason is the psycho-biological feeling of want, dissatisfaction, frustration, etc., which are caused by or related to the above objective conditions, but which surely cannot be identified with them. That this should be so, is intelligible for the reason that the tensions and conflicts, after all, relate to groups of psycho-vital individuals. The essential fact of importance is, therefore, the nature of man and the possibilities of its modification. If this be so then the causes of social tensions and conflicts have to be essentially sought and found in the nature of our normal individual and social mind or consciousness. Now an examination of our mental nature shows a fundamental trait, which Indian psychology has called *Bahirmukhtā* (outward-directedness). Western psychology has lately discovered an equivalent term 'Projection', which however, is used to describe a piece of abnormal behaviour and not affirm a general truth of our nature. This trait seems to play a major part in our social misunderstandings and conflicts, since the attribution of the responsibility of our trouble to another or others is obviously the beginning of the matter. The yoga of Indian psychology, which has dared to look deeply within affirms that this *Bahirmukhtā*, outward-directedness of our nature, blinds us to seeing that the causes of what happens to us lie within us. Sri Aurobindo, who is a most systematic exponent of yoga, affirms categorically that "nothing can endure if it has not a will in our nature, a sanction of the Purusha, a sustained pleasure in some part of the being, even though it be a secret or a perverse pleasure, to keep it in continuance".¹ Psycho-analysis, which

¹ The Life Divine, (American edition), p. 353

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too has dared to probe into the deeper workings of human nature, has affirmed the same truth, within its psychiatric reference, that "the causes of mental disorders are endogenic."

Now an attitude, whether in the individual or a social group, which is inclined, at any rate at the first instance, to examine itself for the causes of its difficulty and seek to correct itself, so far as it can, would be the most important single factor for the resolution of a social tension and conflict. However, on the preventive side, which would naturally be more important, what is needed is the reorientation and reconstruction of human culture on the basis of above-mentioned verified and verifiable truth of yoga, which has now also been recognised by western psychology. However this attempt would only be the first step in the right direction and it will need to be followed up by other appropriate steps leading to a progressive modification of the egoistic impulses into a more universalistic form, which is able to recognise and pursue common good more spontaneously.

This approach is not necessarily opposed to the statistical and allied investigations of the facts of social tensions and conflicts, but according to it their value will consist in the measure they are able to afford some self-knowledge to the social groups concerned and help the growth of the attitude of seeking the causes of difficulties in our nature and attempting a remedy there.

It is, however, opposed to a standpoint of psychology which regards man as a creature of circumstances, denies it an essential independent existence and, therefore, seeks to find a solution of the problems of man in the organisation of his circumstances. Undoubtedly a good part of man's nature is dependent on his external situation and some part of it is bound to remain so at a better cultural level too. Yet the solution of his problems lies in the resolution of his inner conflicts and the harmonisation of his own being. On the whole, the objective situation is the stage and material for the progressive improvement of the essential quality of human life.

(This is the summary of a stand-point represented at a discussion on the subject at the Indian Science Congress.)

INDRA SEN

POETIC INSPIRATION

MANY poets have recognised an invisible mysterious source of inspiration beyond their conscious mind but they could not exactly understand its nature. The only thing about which they were certain was that whatever came from this profounder region of their being was natural and superior in insight to the one produced by the conscious mind. Thus Myers observes: "Genius should be regarded as a power of utilising a wider range than other men can utilize of faculties in some degree innate, in all; so that an 'inspiration of genius' will be in truth a subliminal uprush, an emergence into the current of ideas which the man is consciously manipulating...." Shelley wrote, "Poetry is created by that imperial faculty whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man." Lowell (in Columbus) speaks of some central deep from which the poets write:

"And I believe the poets; it is they
Who utter wisdom from the central deep.
And listening to the inner flow of things
Speak to the age out of eternity."

Carlyle distinguishes the thinking of the conscious surface mind which he calls artificial from the creation of the 'quiet mysterious depths' of the unconscious which he calls the natural. He writes thus, "Of our thinking, we might say, it is but the mere upper surface that we shape into articulate thought; underneath the region of argument and conscious discourse, lies the region of meditation; here in its quiet mysterious depths, dwells what vital force is in us; here, if aught is to be created and not merely manufactured and communicated must the work go on. Manufacture is intelligible but trivial; creation is great, and cannot be understood. Thus if the debater and demonstrator whom we may rank as the lowest of true thinkers, knows what he has done and how he did it, the artist whom we rank as the highest, knows not; must speak of inspiration, and in one or the other dialect

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call his work the gift of divinity." (Essays—Characteristics) Again Wordsworth in the following lines of *Prelude*—Book 2 points out the poor nature of the product of conscious thought:

"That false secondary power
By which we multiply distinctions, then
Seem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive and not that we have made, and on its product
Science as a makeshift. Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
But as a succedaneum, and a prop
To our infirmity."

The attempts made by psycho-analysis in literature to fathom the 'quiet mysterious depths' of poetic inspiration also fail to satisfy us for they have dismissed it by calling it the unconscious mind. Thus Prescott in his book, 'The poetic mind' identifies the muse with the unconscious mind. He writes, "Invocation to the muse is only a solicitation of the unconscious mind." He explains all visions of the invisible world as materials derived from the unconscious source. About Poe's idea of supernal beauty he observes, "When Poe for example says that beauty not that of reality but a supernal beauty is the end of poetical creation, he doubtless has in mind a quality belonging to material derived from this unconscious source." He holds that material comes from both the conscious and unconscious source. But it is mainly the latter "which gives to poetry its peculiar and inexplicable character." A poet utilises mainly the material furnished by the unconscious. He thus defined the unconscious mind, "it means a part of mind which cannot be utilized or controlled voluntarily and whose content cannot be recovered by the memory in voluntary thought—which however does apparently often carry on a part of the operation in the second mode of thought, and whose content is drawn upon in that thought. It is important especially in furnishing material for poetry—as also for dreams and other productions of the imagination."

The entire account is clouded in the mists of the unconscious. It fails to grip our understanding and only serves to point out the need of a new psychology of poetic creation founded upon a deeper insight of living experience. Such a psychology is provided by the poetic eye of Sri Aurobindo who far from calling it the unconscious source writes about those planes of creation as if they are native to his consciousness and holds that great poetry

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can be written only by being perfectly conscious of the so-called mysterious planes from which the inspiration comes. He calls it not the unconscious but the superconscient source. Moreover he has exactly defined the various levels of the so-called unconscious source and has not summarily comprehended them all in one word (superconscient). His masterly analysis of the entire psychology of poetic creation is something unparalleled in the history of literary criticism. Never before has any critic exceeded even the unfailing exactitude of the probing surgeon's knife as Sri Aurobindo in the examination of the most profound subtleties of a poet's 'quiet mysterious depths'. He has gone to the very fount of creation, the planes from which the inspiration flows and is not tied down merely to the inner nature of the poet.

He thus points out the inadequacy of all such accounts in *Future Poetry* (Chapter—'Recent English Poetry' 3), "We take little account of the psychology of poetic genius and are content with saying that the word of the poet is the speech of the imagination or that he works by an inspiration. But this is an insufficient account; for imagination is of many different kinds and inspiration touches the mind at different levels and breaks out through different media before it issues through the gates of the creative imagination. What we mean by inspiration is that the impetus to poetic creation and utterance comes to us from a superconscient source above the ordinary mentality, so that what is written seems not to be the fabrication of the brain-mind, but something more sovereign breathed or poured in from above. That is the possession by the divine enthousiasmos of which Plato has spoken."

What is still more remarkable is the wonderful discriminative insight with which he distinguishes one verse from another by assigning to them their distinct levels of inspiration. Thus of the following lines of Wordsworth

"The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the seasons wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng;
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep."

he writes, "it is precisely the overmind movement that is wanting; in the last line there is something of the overmind substance expressed not directly but through the highest intuitive consciousness, and because it is not direct the overmind rhythm is absent."

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"As for the overmind rhythm and inspiration we get nearer to it in another line of Wordsworth, but I do not remember it exactly and I may misquote,—

'And marble face, the index of a mind
Voyaging through strange seas of thought'

or a line like Milton's

'These thoughts that wander through eternity.'

(A letter to Amal Kiran)

Shelley's poetry he characterises mainly as of psychic inspiration but there is nothing in it of the overhead note. Thus of his famous stanza:

We look before and after
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thought

he writes, "This is perfect poetry with the most exquisite melody and beauty of wording and an unsurpassable poignancy of pathos, but there is no touch or note of the overhead inspiration: it is the mind and the heart, the vital emotion, working at their highest pitch under the stress of a psychic inspiration. The rhythm is of the same character, a direct, straightforward, lucid and lucent movement welling out limpidly straight from the psychic source." (Mystic Poetry—Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual No. 5) At another place, in a letter to Sri Dilip Kumar Roy quoted by him in his book 'Anami', he writes of his other lines:—

I can give not what men call love,
But will thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,—
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

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after bringing out their full suggestive meaning, "Of course all that is not said, but only suggested; but it is obviously the spirit of the poem, and it is this spirit in it that made me write to Amal the other day that it would be perhaps impossible to find in English literature a more perfect example of psychic inspiration than those eight lines you have translated..."

One cannot conceive of any critic ancient or modern who has understood the spirit of a few lines or passages of a poem to such an extent as to go to the length of tracing their very source to particular chamber of the muse or the level of inspiration in which they were created.

It is with the same keen vision of a seer-critic that he examines the psychology of Milton's poetry which is ordinarily spoken of as the best example of sublimity in English poetry, but Sri Aurobindo is not content with such a vague general turn which hardly takes us very far. He holds that it is a mistake to characterise his poetry as having the overhead complexion. "In mental poetry", he writes, "there are derivations or substitutes for the manner of the Higher thought. It is easy for the mind to mistake and take the higher for the lower inspiration or vice versa. Thus Milton's lines

'Of man's first disobedience
And the fruit of that forbidden tree'

or

'On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues'

might at first sight be taken because of a certain depth of emotion in their large lingering rhythm as having the overhead complexion, but this rhythm loses something of its sovereign right because there are no depths of sense behind it. It conveys nothing but the noble and dignified pathos of the blindness and old age of a greater personality fallen into evil days. Milton's architecture of thought and verse is high and powerful and massive, but there are usually no subtle echoes there, no deep chambers: the occult things in men's being are foreign to his intelligence—for it is in the light of the poetic intelligence that he works. He does not stray into 'the mystic cavern of the heart', does not follow the inner fire entering like a thief with the cow of Light into the secret of secrecies." (Mystic Poetry—Sri Aurobindo. Mandir Annual—No. 5) Thus according to Sri Aurobindo Milton's *Paradise Lost* in spite of its mighty amplitude of epic expression and sublimity is mainly an intellectual thought-utterance which though poetic should not be mistaken for any high level of poetic inspiration. In

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'Future Poetry' (The Course of English Poetry 4) he thus writes, "he has given English poetic speech a language of intellectual thought which is of itself highly poetic without depending in the least on any of the formal aids of poetic expression except those which are always essential and indispensable, a speech which is in its very grain poetry and in its very grain intellectual thought-utterance."

Shakespeare's inspiration he characterises as of the life soul though in certain individual lines he attains the level of the illumined mind. He thus observes, "Shakespeare's poetry coruscates with a play of the hues of imagination which we may regard as a mental substitute for the inspiration of the illumined mind and sometimes by aiming at an exalted note he links on to the illumined overhead inspiration itself as in the lines:—

'Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?'

Unlike Milton, Shakespeare does sometimes get into "the mystic Cavern of the heart", the deep chambers of man's being, as if by a splendid psychic accident in spite of his preoccupation with the colours and shows of life."
(Mystic Poetry—Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual No. 5)

LATE JAGADISH SARAN

REVIEW

Japasutram by *Srimad Swami Pratyagananda Saraswati*. Part I Rs. 4/- Part II Rs. 5/-. Published by Mahesha Library 2/1, Shyama Charan De Street, College Square, Calcutta.

Japa or recitation of words or sounds which have special potency has been regarded as a great aid to spiritual sadhana in all countries and all ages, but nowhere has it been turned to such a scientific and efficient means as in the Tantric system of India. But though it is practised widely, its mystery is not generally known and it is more often than not practised blindly and mechanically with no result. The book under review has gone a long way in removing this veil and showing the true nature of japa and the secret of its efficiency. The former name of the author was Professor Pramathanath Mukherjee and he was a co-worker of Sri Aurobindo in the field of education. In research work in the great system of Tantric sadhana his co-operation with the late Sir John Woodroffe is well-known. He wrote many articles and books on Veda and Tantra and philosophy, but he has poured all his knowledge and spiritual experience into this work, his *magnum opus*. The main book is written in Sanskrit verses; like the famous Vedanta Sutras it has four chapters, and each chapter has four sections. The book is vast and only the first two parts have been published which however enable the readers to understand the main principles of Tantric sadhana and realise that behind all the symbols and rites of the Hindu religion there are deep spiritual truths. Sri Aurobindo said about the Hindu religion in his famous Uttarpara Speech, "This is the one religion that can triumph over materialism by including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy." The truth of this great saying has been proved in this book in detail. The author himself has prepared a Sanskrit commentary on his Sutras and translated it into Bengali. In all there are more than five hundred Sutras and the elucidating verses are about two thousand in number. Most of the technical terms we find in Indian spiritual books have been explained here, and in this way the

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book has greatly enriched the Bengali language by providing apt words for scientific and philosophical concepts. This is possible only for a man of his vast erudition and life-long spiritual sadhana.

In the beginning there was the Word, says the Bible. Thus sound is the beginning of all creation, and it follows that a proper manipulation of sound values can be utilised for all creative activities. Their efficiency in music and poetry is well-known. Not only the significance of the words, but the sound vibrations contribute to the *rasa* or *ananda* as well as the illumination which these arts bring to us. When properly used, sound vibrations help us to rise to a higher state of being and consciousness; thus the Upanishad defines *japa* as *abhyāroha* or a means of ascent. The Gita says that of all *yajnas*, or sacrifices the Divine is most manifest in *japa*, *yajñānām japa-yajño'smi*.

Materialism in its modern form, which arose with the phenomenal advance of Natural Science in the nineteenth century, is on the wane. People everywhere are realising more and more that there is no other solution of the persisting ills of human life than the spiritual. Still there are two great obstacles to the advent of the true spiritual age. On the one hand, the scientific attitude has made men sceptic, and though it is useful in uprooting prejudices and superstitions, it engenders a general habit of doubting spiritual values, specially among the *Intelligentia*. On the other hand, those who have faith in spirituality regard mechanical performance of rites and ceremonies and the following of some mental and moral rules and dogmas as the whole of spirituality. Swamiji's book, it is expected, will help largely in removing both these obstacles. People will understand the inner meaning and significance of symbols and images and profit by using them more intelligently. Also the sceptics will see that the tenets of Hinduism are not mere dogmas or blind beliefs, they are at least as much tested truths as the findings of Science. Not only that, when properly understood, they even throw light on problems which are baffling modern scientists.

Everything in the world, says the author, can be considered in three aspects—*Kriyā* (Action), *ākṛiti* (Pattern), *daivata* (Power). For example, I am seeing an object. The seeing is an action. The special organ by which I am seeing in a definite way is the Pattern. And the power of consciousness which is presiding over the whole action is the *daivata* (in this case, *Aditya*, the presiding deity of vision). It is the latter of which material science does not take any account—it has no means of seeing that behind

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everything and every action in the world there is a presiding deity. The animism of the primitive people has an underlying truth which they saw darkly. Take the case of Radium, its atoms burst spontaneously, this is Action. The arrangement inside and outside the atom an account of which this bursting takes place giving rise to *alpha*, *beeta* and *gama* rays constitute the Pattern. But how this bursting takes place without any external cause such as pressure or heat, science is unable to explain. The Tantric system will attribute it to the third element, the Power or *daivata*, the presiding deity. By practising *japa* in the proper manner one can come into direct contact with this deity—it is in this manner that Tantrics can exercise a control over external things and events which is beyond the scope of science. Here is a field of experiment, and those who sincerely seek to know the truth should follow the Tantric discipline and test for themselves its claims which, if established, will widen the power of man over Nature far beyond what has yet been accomplished by Science. "But here also," says Sri Aurobindo, "the latest trend is highly significant of a freer future. As the outposts of Scientific Knowledge come more and more to be set on the borders that divide the material from the immaterial, so also the highest achievements of practical Science are those which tend to simplify and reduce to the vanishing point the machinery by which the greatest effects are produced. Wireless telegraphy is Nature's exterior sign and pretext for a new orientation. The sensible physical means for the intermediate transmission of the physical force is removed. It is only preserved at the points of impulsion and reception. Eventually even these must disappear; for when the laws and forces of the supraphysical are studied with the right starting point, the means will infallibly be found for Mind directly to seize on the physical energy and speed it accurately upon its errand. There, once we bring ourselves to recognise it, lie the gates that open upon the enormous vistas of the future." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, ch. II)

That it is not a mere fancy to expect distant transmission of sounds and messages without the aid of transmitting or receiving sets appears from a consideration of the very nature of Sound. As this deep and subtle knowledge lies at the basis of the practice of *japa*, we shall give here an abridged translation of what Swamiji has said about it in an introductory essay given at the beginning of the book.

"The Science of *japa* is essentially a spiritual Science. It has been said that there are three accessories for *japa*—*vak* (speech), *prana* (vital), *mana* (mind). The action of *japa* is not performed disregarding the material

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body. Thus what we regard as gross is the first standing ground of japa. The laws of this material body are therefore not irrelevant to this first stepping place of japa. Japa also requires a special function of the vital force, and in that function there must be symmetry and harmony, just as this is indispensable in music. Unless there is the harmony, the action of japa will not be effective. Take the word *Kṛiṣṇa*; if it be pronounced as *Krisna*, as many people do, the dental s and the dental n will not be symmetrical with the guttural *ka* and also with *ṣ* and *ṇ*, and thus instead of harmonic function, there will be disordant function.

Japa and for that matter any other action requires these three things for its efficacy—(1) *Vidya* (correct technique), (2) *Sraddha* (starting from working belief and interest) and (3) *upanisat* (grasp of basic principles). For correct technique or *vidya* we must take the help of Science, and in this respect we cannot ignore the expert knowledge of physical, biological and mental Science. As a matter of fact, science is science whether it be physical or spiritual, and it is wrong to erect an insurmountable wall between the two. Of course only spiritual science can claim to be perfect, but it has to reach this perfection by taking up the knowledge given by the other sciences and integrating them. Japa, taken, as here, in the wider science no doubt belongs to spiritual science, but in many respects it has to obey the laws discovered by the physical sciences. For that the sadhaka of japa need not go to a physical laboratory just as a violinist need not do so—but they have to depend on the knowledge discovered in such laboratories. Of course in spiritual matters the main thing is the deeper flow of power from the spirit or soul, but the surface and external things also cannot be ignored—the entire being of the *jiva* has to be taken into account.

We find in the Veda that this creation comes from sound, that sound is the origin of this universe. What sort of sound is this? Is it the same sound as we hear by our ear? The sound we hear by our ear depends on several things. First, there must be some disturbance somewhere in the atmosphere. It is something like the ripples created in water when a stone is thrown into it. That disturbance extending like waves has to strike our ear, our auditory nerves and some parts of the brain before our consciousness responds to it and we hear the sound. Again, if the disturbance is too strong or too weak we do not hear any sound. There is a lower limit and an upper limit to the rate of vibration, and unless the vibrations of the air are within these two limits we generally do not hear any sound. Yet as the existence of ultra-violet and infra-red rays outside the range of our vision is proved

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by science, so the existence also of vibrations beyond audible sounds is proved, and supersonics and ultrasonics are making research in those phenomena. In the formation and dissolution of chemical compounds, in the breaking of atoms, in the control of the subtle activities of the body and the mind, the influence of these subtle vibrations is being increasingly admitted. We cannot hear a sound unless a vibration is carried by the medium of air and strikes our auditory organ and reaches the brain cells. Beside this there is the factor of attention—we do not hear a sound unless our mind is turned towards it.

This rough account of the phenomena of sound shows that the ordinary sound cannot be regarded as the origin of creation. For such sound requires a vibration in air, but where is air before creation? Such sound requires auditory organs and the brain which are non-existent before creation. There is also no mind to pay attention. What we experience as sound came after creation, not before it. What is at the beginning of creation can be called a "primordial causal movement". From that primal source issue various "lines or streams of effectual manifestation" in various directions. All the forms we see, the sounds we hear, the taste, smell and touch we experience, all the joy and sorrow we feel—are different streams of such manifestation. What was before this primal vibration, whether or how it arose in an infinite silence and immobility, we need not discuss here. It is sufficient to understand that at the source of all our experience is a vibration, *spanda*, *cāñcalya*, stressing. The resultant manifestation of this stressing in my consciousness constitutes my knowledge of things. This applies equally to all such manifestations as light, heat, sound. The atoms of some object are vibrating restlessly; ether or some such subtle medium carries that and excites my sense-organs; the response of my consciousness to that stimulus constitutes my experience of heat. We need not have any doubt that at the source of all sense-experience, there is a stir, an agitation.

But apart from the way how we know or feel an object, what is the object in itself? Take this watch, it looks like a solid and stable thing, but at this moment I can break it to pieces, those pieces can be still further divided. So far as chemistry is concerned we stop at the atom which is regarded as indivisible. But that also is not really indivisible, science says that an atom is made up of electrical particles, such as electrons; an atom has a very complicated structure, it is a scalar system in miniature. So there is no rest anywhere, movements are going on inside the atom as in the bigger world outside. Where is the end of this activity? What is there inside an electron?

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Science, even some time ago, dared not conceive anything about it, but wave mechanics has shown that electron is not the last word in the formation of matter. Indeed in explaining the structure of matter, science is using mathematical concepts which are nothing more than symbols or a convenient or conventional way of describing the phenomena observed. This much is certain that at the beginning of creation we arrive at a *spanda*, a vibration or stressing. Let us designate this spanda as *paraśabda*, whether we hear that as sound or not; what we hear can be called *aparaśabda* or *dhvani*. There is difference in the capacity of hearing among individuals; certain animals can hear sounds inaudible to human beings. With the help of instruments like megaphone, microphone we can perhaps hear the movements of an ant's feet. If there be any truth in the spiritual science of the Hindus, a person by practising *samyama* can hear the subtlest of the subtle sounds, even the movements of electrons may not be altogether inaudible. Thus the capacity of hearing is relative, variable and conditional. The sound we ordinarily hear may be called *sthūla śabda*, gross sound. The sound that can be heard with the help of instruments or by the development of yogic powers may be called *sūkṣma śabda*, subtle sound. But instruments are not perfect; yogic powers may have defects—so the question arises, is there any condition in which hearing is absolute and perfect? Following the analogy of mathematics we can assert that there is such a condition where the soul can hear a spanda or vibration without the help of any instrument or organ. Such a capacity of hearing may be termed Absolute ear. Not only hearing, we can conceive also Absolute eye, Absolute tongue and so forth. These may not be gross things like the eye, tongue etc., they signify limits of a particular capacity. By the Absolute Ear we get sound as it is which is known in Indian philosophy as *śabda tanmātra*.

* * *

“All things in the world are centres of a play of forces, everything has at its basis a causal stress. The vibration of this basic stress of a thing as heard by the Absolute ear is its natural name or *Vijamantra*. Such a *vijamantra* has the power to create the object of which it is the natural name. This is the principle underlying all practice of japa. Take for example fire, we have no absolute ear to hear its original vibration, but by the yogic ear it is heard as *ram*. Our recitation of these mantras is not pure, there-

fore their power is dormant. By *puraścāra*n and other Tantric processes, this power can be awakened, and then actual fire can be produced by the recitation of *ram*. This is not a matter of blind belief, we point here to a field of experiment, like any other field of scientific experiment. Science has gained much control over forces of Nature, but that control has not reached its highest limit. Indian Yoga is an attempt in that direction. If one can attain the Absolute Ear or very near it, it will not be impossible to dispense with transmitting and receiving sets for hearing or seeing sounds and sights from any distance."

We have already said that there is hardly any symbol or image in Hindu religion for the true significance of which the author has not given a clue; he has, for instance, interpreted the rat of Ganapati and even the crow sitting on the chariot of *Lhūmāvātī*. A question arises why the ancient Rishis and sadhakas clothed deep spiritual truths in such enigmatical symbols which sometimes appear to be grotesque and even obscene. The answer is that these truths are not at once obvious because they were the result of long psychological experiment and profound internal experience. "Therefore without a long inner experience, without intimate self-observation and intuitive perception of the Nature-forces it is difficult to grasp accurately or firmly utilise them." The symbols would be easily understood by persons who follow the spiritual path and undergo some discipline. Modern Science also is following the same path, it is using symbols (mathematical in this case) to express its highest truths such as the spherical Universe, space-Time Continuum, etc. which are absolutely unintelligible to the man in the street, but are of engrossing interest to a Science student.

It is often said that the Vedic sadhana was replaced by the Tantric as being more suitable to the people of Kaliyuga. Our author says that this does not mean any diminution or dilution to suit weaker people. It only means that humanity is progressing and as it is nearing the goal, the prospect becomes more clear and the steps can be more quickened. Following the same argument we can say that we of the modern age have outgrown even the Tantra and require a newer synthesis to arrive at the final achievement for which humanity has been preparing through ages with various means and methods. In this connection we can quote here what Sri Aurobindo said in the first chapter of his *Essays on the Gita*:

"There is yet another, the Tantric, which though less subtle and spiritually profound, is even more bold and forceful than the synthesis of the Gita,—for it seizes even upon the obstacles to the spiritual life and compels

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them to become the means for a richer spiritual conquest and enables us to embrace the whole of Life in our divine scope as the Lila of the Divine; and in some directions it is more immediately rich and fruitful, for it brings forward into the foreground along with divine knowledge, divine works and an enriched devotion of divine Love, the secrets also of the Hatha and Raja Yogas, the use of the body and of mental askesis for the opening up of the divine life on all its planes, to which the Gita gives only a passing and perfunctory attention. Moreover it grasps at the idea of the divine perfectibility of man, possessed by the Vedic Rishis but thrown into the background by the intermediate ages, which is destined to fill so large a place in any future synthesis of human thought, experience and aspiration.

We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. We are not called upon to be orthodox Vedantins of any of the three schools or Tantrics or to adhere to one of the theistic religions of the past or to entrench ourselves within the four corners of the teaching of the Gita. That would be to limit ourselves and to attempt to create our spiritual life out of the being, knowledge and nature of others, of the men of the past, instead of building it out of our own being and potentialities. We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us; we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking; and, beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost to the consciousness of mankind but now breaking out again from behind the veil. All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis; a fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains is both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the future."

A. B.

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